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# **CELTIC MYTHOLOGY**

**HISTORY OF CELTS, RELIGION, ARCHEOLOGICAL FINDS, LEGENDS & MYTHS**



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# Introduction

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## Earliest References

In the chronicles of the classical nations for about five hundred years previous to the Christian era there are frequent references to a people associated with these nations, sometimes in peace, sometimes in war, and evidently occupying a position of great strength and influence in the Terra Incognita of Mid-Europe. This people is called by the Greeks the Hyperboreans or Celts, the latter term being first found in the geographer Hecatæsus, about 500 B.C.<sup>1</sup>

Herodotus, about half a century later, speaks of the Celts as dwelling “beyond the pillars of Hercules”—*i.e.*, in Spain—and also of the Danube as rising in their country.

Aristotle knew that they dwelt “beyond Spain,” that they had captured Rome, and that they set great store by warlike power. References other than geographical are occasionally met with even in early writers. Hellanicus of Lesbos, an historian of the fifth century B.C., describes the Celts as practising justice and righteousness. Ephorus, about 350 B.C., has three lines of verse about the Celts in which they are described as using “the same customs as the Greeks”—whatever that may mean—and being on the friendliest terms with that people, who established guest friendships among them. Plato, however, in the “Laws,” classes the Celts among the peoples who are drunken and combative, and much barbarity is attributed to them on the occasion of their irruption into Greece and the sacking of Delphi in the year 273 B.C. Their attack on Rome and the sacking of that city by them about a century earlier is one of the landmarks of ancient history.

The history of this people during the time when they were the dominant power in Mid-Europe has to be divined or reconstructed from scattered references, and from accounts of episodes in their dealings with Greece and Rome, very much as the figure of a primæval monster is reconstructed by

the zoologist from a few fossilised bones. No chronicles of their own have come down to us, no architectural remains have survived; a few coins, and a few ornaments and weapons in bronze decorated with enamel or with subtle and beautiful designs in chased or repoussé work—these, and the names which often cling in strangely altered forms to the places where they dwelt, from the Euxine to the British Islands, are well-nigh all the visible traces which this once mighty power has left us of its civilisation and dominion. Yet from these, and from the accounts of classical writers, much can be deduced with certainty, and much more can be conjectured with a very fair measure of probability. The great Celtic scholar whose loss we have recently had to deplore, M. d'Arbois de Jubainville, has, on the available data, drawn a convincing outline of Celtic history for the period prior to their emergence into full historical light with the conquests of Cæsar,<sup>2</sup> and it is this outline of which the main features are reproduced here.

### **Golden Age of the Celts**

But we are anticipating, and must return to the period of the origins of Celtic history. As astronomers have discerned the existence of an unknown planet by the perturbations which it has caused in the courses of those already under direct observation, so we can discern in the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ the presence of a great power and of mighty movements going on behind a veil which will never be lifted now. This was the Golden Age of Celtdom in Continental Europe. During this period the Celts waged three great and successful wars, which had no little influence on the course of South European history. About 500 B.C. they conquered Spain from the Carthaginians. A century later we find them engaged in the conquest of Northern Italy from the Etruscans. They settled in large numbers in the territory afterwards known as Cisalpine Gaul, where many names, such as *Mediolanum* (Milan), *Addua* (Adda), *Viro-dunum* (Verduno), and perhaps *Cremona* (*creamh*, garlic),<sup>3</sup> testify still to their occupation. They left a greater memorial in the chief of Latin poets, whose



name, Vergil, appears to bear evidence of his Celtic ancestry.<sup>4</sup> Towards the end of the fourth century they overran Pannonia, conquering the Illyrians.

### **Alliances with the Greeks**

All these wars were undertaken in alliance with the Greeks, with whom the Celts were at this period on the friendliest terms. By the war with the Carthaginians the monopoly held by that people of the trade in tin with Britain and in silver with the miners of Spain was broken down, and the overland route across France to Britain, for the sake of which the Phocæans had in 600 B.C. created the port of Marseilles, was definitely secured to Greek trade. Greeks and Celts were at this period allied against Phœnicians and Persians. The defeat of Hamilcar by Gelon at Himera, in Sicily, took place in the same year as that of Xerxes at Salamis. The Carthaginian army in that expedition was made up of mercenaries from half a dozen different nations, but not a Celt is found in the Carthaginian ranks, and Celtic hostility must have counted for much in preventing the Carthaginians from lending help to the Persians for the overthrow of their common enemy. These facts show that Celtica played no small part in preserving the Greek type of civilisation from being overwhelmed by the despotisms of the East, and thus in keeping alive in Europe the priceless seed of freedom and humane culture.

### **Alexander the Great**

When the counter-movement of Hellas against the East began under Alexander the Great we find the Celts again appearing as a factor of importance. In the fourth century Macedon was attacked and almost obliterated by Thracian and Illyrian hordes. King Amyntas II. was defeated and driven into exile. His son Perdiccas II. was killed in battle. When Philip, a younger brother of Perdiccas, came to the obscure and tottering throne which he and his successors were to make the seat of a great empire he was powerfully aided in making head against the Illyrians by the

conquests of the Celts in the valleys of the Danube and the Po. The alliance was continued, and rendered, perhaps, more formal in the days of Alexander. When about to undertake his conquest of Asia (334 B.C.) Alexander first made a compact with the Celts “who dwelt by the Ionian Gulf” in order to secure his Greek dominions from attack during his absence. The episode is related by Ptolemy Soter in his history of the wars of Alexander.<sup>5</sup> It has a vividness which stamps it as a bit of authentic history, and another singular testimony to the truth of the narrative has been brought to light by de Jubainville. As the Celtic envoys, who are described as men of haughty bearing and great stature, their mission concluded, were drinking with the king, he asked them, it is said, what was the thing they, the Celts, most feared. The envoys replied: “We fear no man: there is but one thing that we fear, namely, that the sky should fall on us; but we regard nothing so much as the friendship of a man such as thou.” Alexander bade them farewell, and, turning to his nobles, whispered: “What a vainglorious people are these Celts!” Yet the answer, for all its Celtic bravura and flourish, was not without both dignity and courtesy. The reference to the falling of the sky seems to give a glimpse of some primitive belief or myth of which it is no longer possible to discover the meaning.<sup>6</sup> The national oath by which the Celts bound themselves to the observance of their covenant with Alexander is remarkable. “If we observe not this engagement,” they said, “may the sky fall on us and crush us, may the earth gape and swallow us up, may the sea burst out and overwhelm us.” De Jubainville draws attention most appositely to a passage from the “*Táin Bo Cuailgne*,” in the Book of Leinster<sup>7</sup>, where the Ulster heroes declare to their king, who wished to leave them in battle in order to meet an attack in another part of the field: “Heaven is above us, and earth beneath us, and the sea is round about us. Unless the sky shall fall with its showers of stars on the ground where we are camped, or unless the earth shall be rent by an earthquake, or unless the waves of the blue sea come over the forests of the living world, we shall not give ground.”<sup>8</sup> This survival of a peculiar oath-formula for more than a thousand years, and its reappearance, after being first heard of among the Celts of Mid-Europe, in a mythical romance of Ireland, is

certainly most curious, and, with other facts which we shall note hereafter, speaks strongly for the community and persistence of Celtic culture.<sup>9</sup>

## **The Sack of Rome**

We have mentioned two of the great wars of the Continental Celts; we come now to the third, that with the Etruscans, which ultimately brought them into conflict with the greatest power of pagan Europe, and led to their proudest feat of arms, the sack of Rome. About the year 400 B.C. the Celtic Empire seems to have reached the height of its power. Under a king named by Livy Ambicatus, who was probably the head of a dominant tribe in a military confederacy, like the German Emperor in the present day, the Celts seem to have been welded into a considerable degree of political unity, and to have followed a consistent policy. Attracted by the rich land of Northern Italy, they poured down through the passes of the Alps, and after hard fighting with the Etruscan inhabitants they maintained their ground there. At this time the Romans were pressing on the Etruscans from below, and Roman and Celt were acting in definite concert and alliance. But the Romans, despising perhaps the Northern barbarian warriors, had the rashness to play them false at the siege of Clusium, 391 B.C., a place which the Romans regarded as one of the bulwarks of Latium against the North. The Celts recognised Romans who had come to them in the sacred character of ambassadors fighting in the ranks of the enemy. The events which followed are, as they have come down to us, much mingled with legend, but there are certain touches of dramatic vividness in which the true character of the Celts appears distinctly recognisable. They applied, we are told, to Rome for satisfaction for the treachery of the envoys, who were three sons of Fabius Ambustus, the chief pontiff. The Romans refused to listen to the claim, and elected the Fabii military tribunes for the ensuing year. Then the Celts abandoned the siege of Clusium and marched straight on Rome. The army showed perfect discipline. There was no indiscriminate plundering and devastation, no city or fortress was assailed. "We are bound for Rome" was their cry to the guards upon the walls of the provincial

towns, who watched the host in wonder and fear as it rolled steadily to the south. At last they reached the river Allia, a few miles from Rome, where the whole available force of the city was ranged to meet them. The battle took place on July 18, 390, that ill-omened *dies Alliensis* which long perpetuated in the Roman calendar the memory of the deepest shame the republic had ever known. The Celts turned the flank of the Roman army, and annihilated it in one tremendous charge. Three days later they were in Rome, and for nearly a year they remained masters of the city, or of its ruins, till a great fine had been exacted and full vengeance taken for the perfidy at Clusium. For nearly a century after the treaty thus concluded there was peace between the Celts and the Romans, and the breaking of that peace when certain Celtic tribes allied themselves with their old enemy, the Etruscans, in the third Samnite war was coincident with the breaking up of the Celtic Empire.<sup>10</sup>

Two questions must now be considered before we can leave the historical part of this Introduction. First of all, what are the evidences for the widespread diffusion of Celtic power in Mid-Europe during this period? Secondly, where were the Germanic peoples, and what was their position in regard to the Celts?

### **Celtic Place-names in Europe**

To answer these questions fully would take us (for the purposes of this volume) too deeply into philological discussions, which only the Celtic scholar can fully appreciate. The evidence will be found fully set forth in de Jubainville's work, already frequently referred to. The study of European place-names forms the basis of the argument. Take the Celtic name *Noviomagus* composed of two Celtic words, the adjective meaning new, and *magos* (Irish *magh*) a field or plain.<sup>11</sup> There were nine places of this name known in antiquity. Six were in France, among them the places now called Noyon, in Oise, Nijon, in Vosges, Nyons, in Drôme. Three outside of France were Nimègue, in Belgium, Neumagen, in the Rhineland, and one at Speyer, in the Palatinate.



The word *dunum*, so often traceable in Gaelic place-names in the present day (Dundalk, Dunrobin, &c.), and meaning fortress or castle, is another typically Celtic element in European place-names. It occurred very frequently in France—*e.g.*, *Lug-dunum* (Lyons), *Viro-dunum* (Verdun). It is also found in Switzerland—*e.g.*, *Minno-dunum* (Moudon), *Eburo-dunum* (Yverdon)—and in the Netherlands, where the famous city of Leyden goes back to a Celtic *Lug-dunum*. In Great Britain the Celtic term was often changed by simple translation into *castra*; thus *Camulo-dunum* became Colchester, *Brano-dunum* Brancaster. In Spain and Portugal eight names terminating in *dunum* are mentioned by classical writers. In Germany the modern names Kempton, Karnberg, Liegnitz, go back respectively to the Celtic forms *Cambo-dunum*, *Carro-aunum*, *Lugi-dunum*, and we find a *Singi-dunum*, now Belgrade, in Servia, a *Novi-dunum*, now Isaktscha, in Roumania, a *Carro-dunum* in South Russia, near the Dniester, and another in Croatia, now Pitsmeza. *Sego-dunum*, now Rodez, in France, turns up also in Bavaria (Wurzburg), and in England (*Sege-dunum*, now Wallsend, in Northumberland), and the first term, *sego*, is traceable in Segorbe (*Sego-briga*) in Spain. *Briga* is a Celtic word, the origin of the German *burg*, and equivalent in meaning to *dunum*.

One more example: the word *magos*, a plain, which is very frequent as an element of Irish place-names, is found abundantly in France, and outside of France, in countries no longer Celtic, it appears in Switzerland (*Uro-magus* now Promasens), in the Rhineland (*Broco-magus*, Brumath), in the Netherlands, as already noted (Nimègue), in Lombardy several times, and in Austria.

The examples given are by no means exhaustive, but they serve to indicate the wide diffusion of the Celts in Europe and their identity of language over their vast territory.<sup>12</sup>

## Early Celtic Art

The relics of ancient Celtic art-work tell the same story. In the year 1846 a great pre-Roman necropolis was discovered at Hallstatt, near Salzburg, in

Austria. It contains relics believed by Dr. Arthur Evans to date from about 750 to 400 B.C. These relics betoken in some cases a high standard of civilisation and considerable commerce. Amber from the Baltic is there, Phoenician glass, and gold-leaf of Oriental workmanship. Iron swords are found whose hilts and sheaths are richly decorated with gold, ivory, and amber.

The Celtic culture illustrated by the remains at Hallstatt developed later into what is called the La Tène culture. La Tène was a settlement at the north-eastern end of the Lake of Neuchâtel, and many objects of great interest have been found there since the site was first explored in 1858. These antiquities represent, according to Dr. Evans, the culminating period of Gaulish civilisation, and date from round about the third century B.C. The type of art here found must be judged in the light of an observation recently made by Mr. Romilly Allen in his "Celtic Art" (p. 13):

"The great difficulty in understanding the evolution of Celtic art lies in the fact that although the Celts never seem to have invented any new ideas, they possessed an extraordinary aptitude for picking up ideas from the different peoples with whom war or commerce brought them into contact. And once the Celt had borrowed an idea from his neighbours he was able to give it such a strong Celtic tinge that it soon became something so different from what it was originally as to be almost unrecognisable."

Now what the Celt borrowed in the art-culture which on the Continent culminated in the La Tène relics were certain originally naturalistic motives for Greek ornaments, notably the palmette and the meander motives. But it was characteristic of the Celt that he avoided in his art all imitation of, or even approximation to, the natural forms of the plant and animal world. He reduced everything to pure decoration. What he enjoyed in decoration was the alternation of long sweeping curves and undulations with the concentrated energy of close-set spirals or bosses, and with these simple elements and with the suggestion of a few motives derived from Greek art he elaborated a most beautiful, subtle, and varied system of decoration, applied to weapons, ornaments, and to toilet and household appliances of all kinds, in gold, bronze, wood, and stone, and possibly, if we had the means

of judging, to textile fabrics also. One beautiful feature in the decoration of metal-work seems to have entirely originated in Celtica. Enamelling was unknown to the classical nations till they learned from the Celts. So late as the third century A.D. it was still strange to the classical world, as we learn from the reference of Philostratus:

“They say that the barbarians who live in the ocean (Britons) pour these colours upon heated brass, and that they adhere, become hard as stone, and preserve the designs that are made upon them.”

Dr. J. Anderson writes in the “Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland”:

“The Gauls as well as the Britons—of the same Celtic stock—practised enamel-working before the Roman conquest. The enamel workshops of Bibracte, with their furnaces, crucibles, moulds, polishing-stones, and with the crude enamels in their various stages of preparation, have been recently excavated from the ruins of the city destroyed by Caesar and his legions. But the Bibracte enamels are the work of mere dabblers in the art, compared with the British examples. The home of the art was Britain, and the style of the pattern, as well as the association in which the objects decorated with it were found, demonstrated with certainty that it had reached its highest stage of indigenous development before it came in contact with the Roman culture.”<sup>13</sup>

The National Museum in Dublin contains many superb examples of Irish decorative art in gold, bronze, and enamels, and the “strong Celtic tinge” of which Mr. Romilly Allen speaks is as clearly observable there as in the relics of Hallstatt or La Tène.

Everything, then, speaks of a community of culture, a people's identity, existing over the vast territory known to the ancient world as "Celtica."

## Celts and Germans

But, as we have said before, this territory was by no means inhabited by the Celt alone. In particular we have to ask, who and where were the Germans, the Teuto-Gothic tribes, who eventually took the place of the Celts as the great Northern menace to classical civilisation?

They are mentioned by Pytheas, the eminent Greek traveller and geographer, about 300 B.C., but they play no part in history till, under the name of Cimbri and Teutones, they descended on Italy to be vanquished by Marius at the close of the second century. The ancient Greek geographers prior to Pytheas know nothing of them, and assign all the territories now known as Germanic to various Celtic tribes.

The explanation given by de Jubainville, and based by him on various philological considerations, is that the Germans were a subject people, comparable to those "un-free tribes" who existed in Gaul and in ancient Ireland. They lived under the Celtic dominion, and had no independent political existence. De Jubainville finds that all the words connected with law and government and war which are common both to the Celtic and Teutonic languages were borrowed by the latter from the former. Chief among them are the words represented by the modern German *Reich*, empire, *Amt*, office, and the Gothic *reiks*, a king, all of which are of unquestioned Celtic origin. De Jubainville also numbers among loan words from Celtic the words *Bann*, an order; *Frei*, free; *Geisel*, a hostage; *Erbe*, an inheritance; *Werth*, value; *Weih*, sacred; *Magus*, a slave (Gothic); *Wini*, a wife (Old High German); *Skalks*, *Schalk*, a slave (Gothic); *Hathu*, battle (Old German); *Helith*, *Held*, a hero, from the same root as the word Celt; *Heer*, an army (Celtic *choris*); *Sieg*, victory; *Beute*, booty; *Burg*, a castle; and many others.

The etymological history of some of these words is interesting. *Amt*, for instance, that word of so much significance in modern German



administration, goes back to an ancient Celtic *ambhactos*, which is compounded of the words *ambi*, about, and *actos*, a past participle derived from the Celtic root *AG*, meaning to act. Now *ambi* descends from the primitive Indo-European *mbhi*, where the initial *m* is a kind of vowel, afterwards represented in Sanscrit by *a*. This *m* vowel became *n* in those Germanic words which derive directly from the primitive Indo-European tongue. But the word which is now represented by *amt* appears in its earliest Germanic form as *ambaht*, thus making plain its descent from the Celtic *ambhactos*.

Again, the word *frei* is found in its earliest Germanic form as *frijo-s*, which comes from the primitive Indo-European *prijo-s*. The word here does not, however, mean free; it means beloved (Sanskrit *priya-s*). In the Celtic language, however, we find *prijos* dropping its initial *p*—a difficulty in pronouncing this letter was a marked feature in ancient Celtic; it changed *j*, according to a regular rule, into *dd*, and appears in modern Welsh as *rhydd*=free. The Indo-European meaning persists in the Germanic languages in the name of the love-goddess, *Freia*, and in the word *Freund*, friend, *Friede*, peace. The sense borne by the word in the sphere of civil right is traceable to a Celtic origin, and in that sense appears to have been a loan from Celtic.

The German *Beute*, booty, plunder, has had an instructive history. There was a Gaulish word *bodi* found in compounds such as the place-name Segobodium (Seveux), and various personal and tribal names, including Boudicca, better known to us as the “British warrior queen,” Boadicea. This word meant anciently “victory.” But the fruits of victory are spoil, and in this material sense the word was adopted in German, in French (*butin*) in Norse (*byte*), and the Welsh (*budd*). On the other hand, the word preserved its elevated significance in Irish. In the Irish translation of Chronicles xxix. 11, where the Vulgate original has “Tua est, Domine, magnificentia et potentia et gloria et victoria,” the word *victoria* is rendered by the Irish *búaidh*, and, as de Jubainville remarks, “ce n'est pas de butin qu'il s'agit.” He goes on to say: “*Búaidh* has preserved in Irish, thanks to a vigorous and persistent literary culture, the high meaning which it bore in the tongue of

the Gaulish aristocracy. The material sense of the word was alone perceived by the lower classes of the population, and it is the tradition of this lower class which has been preserved in the German, the French, and the Cymric languages.”<sup>14</sup>

Two things, however, the Celts either could not or would not impose on the subjugated German tribes—their language and their religion. In these two great factors of tribal-unity and pride lay the seeds of the ultimate German uprising and overthrow of the Celtic supremacy. The names of the German are different from those of the Celtic deities, their funeral customs, with which are associated the deepest religious conceptions of primitive people, are different. The Celts, or at least the dominant section of them, buried their dead, regarding the use of fire as a humiliation, to be inflicted on criminals, or upon slaves or prisoners in those terrible human sacrifices which are the greatest stain on their native culture. The Germans, on the other hand, burned their illustrious dead on pyres, like the early Greeks—if a pyre could not be afforded for the whole body, the noblest parts, such as the head and arms, were burned and the rest buried.

### **Downfall of the Celtic Empire**

What exactly took place at the time of the German revolt we shall never know; certain it is, however, that from about the year 300 B.C. onward the Celts appear to have lost whatever political cohesion and common purpose they had possessed. Rent asunder, as it were, by the upthrust of some mighty subterranean force, their tribes rolled down like lava-streams to the south, east, and west of their original home. Some found their way into Northern Greece, where they committed the outrage which so scandalised their former friends and allies in the sack of the shrine of Delphi (273 B.C.). Others renewed, with worse fortune, the old struggle with Rome, and perished in vast numbers at Sentinum (295 B.C.) and Lake Vadimo (283 B.C.). One detachment penetrated into Asia Minor, and founded the Celtic State of Galatia, where, as St. Jerome attests, a Celtic dialect was still spoken in the fourth century A.D. Others enlisted as mercenary troops with

Carthage. A tumultuous war of Celts against scattered German tribes, or against other Celts who represented earlier waves of emigration and conquest, went on all over Mid-Europe, Gaul, and Britain. When this settled down Gaul and the British Islands remained practically the sole relics of the Celtic empire, the only countries still under Celtic law and leadership. By the commencement of the Christian era Gaul and Britain had fallen under the yoke of Rome, and their complete Romanisation was only a question of time.

### **Unique Historical Position of Ireland**

Ireland alone was never even visited, much less subjugated, by the Roman legionaries, and maintained its independence against all comers nominally until the close of the twelfth century, but for all practical purposes a good three hundred years longer.

Ireland has therefore this unique feature of interest, that it carried an indigenous Celtic civilisation, Celtic institutions, art, and literature, and the oldest surviving form of the Celtic language,<sup>15</sup> right across the chasm which separates the antique from the modern world, the pagan from the Christian world, and on into the full light of modern history and observation.

### **The Celtic Character**

The moral no less than the physical characteristics attributed by classical writers to the Celtic peoples show a remarkable distinctness and consistency. Much of what is said about them might, as we should expect, be said of any primitive and unlettered people, but there remains so much to differentiate them among the civilizations of mankind that if these ancient references to the Celts could be read aloud, without mentioning the name of the people to whom they referred, to any person acquainted with it through modern history alone, he would, I think, without hesitation, name the Celtic peoples as the subject of the description which he had heard.

Some of these references have already been quoted, and we need not repeat the evidence derived from Plato, Ephorus, or Arrian. But an observation of M. Porcius Cato on the Gauls may be adduced. “There are two things,” he says, “to which the Gauls are devoted—the art of war and subtlety of speech” (“rem militarem et argute loqui”).

### **Cæsar's Account**

Cæsar has given us a careful and critical account of them as he knew them in Gaul. They were, he says, eager for battle, but easily dashed by reverses. They were extremely superstitious, submitting to their Druids in all public and private affairs, and regarding it as the worst of punishments to be excommunicated and forbidden to approach the ceremonies of religion:

“They who are thus interdicted (for refusing to obey a Druidical sentence) are reckoned in the number of the vile and wicked; all persons avoid and fly their company and discourse, lest they should receive any infection by contagion; they are not permitted to commence a suit; neither is any post entrusted to them.... The Druids are generally freed from military service, nor do they pay taxes with the rest.... Encouraged by such rewards, many of their own accord come to their schools, and are sent by their friends and relations. They are said there to get by heart a great number of verses; some continue twenty years in their education; neither is it held lawful to commit these things (the Druidic doctrines) to writing, though in almost all public transactions and private accounts they use the Greek characters.”

The Gauls were eager for news, besieging merchants and travellers for gossip,<sup>16</sup> easily influenced, sanguine, credulous, fond of change, and wavering in their counsels. They were at the same time remarkably acute



and intelligent, very quick to seize upon and to imitate any contrivance they found useful. Their ingenuity in baffling the novel siege apparatus of the Roman armies is specially noticed by Cæsar. Of their courage he speaks with great respect, attributing their scorn of death, in some degree at least, to their firm faith in the immortality of the soul.<sup>17</sup> A people who in earlier days had again and again annihilated Roman armies, had sacked Rome, and who had more than once placed Cæsar himself in positions of the utmost anxiety and peril, were evidently no weaklings, whatever their religious beliefs or practices. Cæsar is not given to sentimental admiration of his foes, but one episode at the siege of Avaricum moves him to immortalise the valour of the defence. A wooden structure or *agger* had been raised by the Romans to overtop the walls, which had proved impregnable to the assaults of the battering-ram. The Gauls contrived to set this on fire. It was of the utmost moment to prevent the besiegers from extinguishing the flames, and a Gaul mounted a portion of the wall above the *agger*, throwing down upon it balls of tallow and pitch, which were handed up to him from within. He was soon struck down by a missile from a Roman catapult. Immediately another stepped over him as he lay, and continued his comrade's task. He too fell, but a third instantly took his place, and a fourth; nor was this post ever deserted until the legionaries at last extinguished the flames and forced the defenders back into the town, which was finally captured on the following day.

### **Strabo on the Celts**

The geographer and traveller Strabo, who died 24 A.D., and was therefore a little later than Cæsar, has much to tell us about the Celts. He notices that their country (in this case Gaul) is thickly inhabited and well tilled—there is no waste of natural resources. The women are prolific, and notably good mothers. He describes the men as warlike, passionate, disputatious, easily provoked, but generous and unsuspicious, and easily vanquished by stratagem. They showed themselves eager for culture, and Greek letters and science had spread rapidly among them from Massilia; public education

was established in their towns. They fought better on horseback than on foot, and in Strabo's time formed the flower of the Roman cavalry. They dwelt in great houses made of arched timbers with walls of wickerwork—no doubt plastered with clay and lime, as in Ireland—and thickly thatched. Towns of much importance were found in Gaul, and Cæsar notes the strength of their walls, built of stone and timber. Both Cæsar and Strabo agree that there was a very sharp division between the nobles and priestly or educated class on the one hand and the common people on the other, the latter being kept in strict subjection. The social division corresponds roughly, no doubt, to the distinction between the true Celts and the aboriginal populations subdued by them. While Cæsar tells us that the Druids taught the immortality of the soul, Strabo adds that they believed in the indestructibility, which implies in some sense the divinity, of the material universe.

The Celtic warrior loved display. Everything that gave brilliance and the sense of drama to life appealed to him. His weapons were richly ornamented, his horse-trappings were wrought in bronze and enamel, of design as exquisite as any relic of Mycenaean or Cretan art, his raiment was embroidered with gold. The scene of the surrender of Vercingetorix, when his heroic struggle with Rome had come to an end on the fall of Alesia, is worth recording as a typically Celtic blend of chivalry and of what appeared to the sober-minded Romans childish ostentation.<sup>18</sup> When he saw that the cause was lost he summoned a tribal council, and told the assembled chiefs, whom he had led through a glorious though unsuccessful war, that he was ready to sacrifice himself for his still faithful followers—they might send his head to Cæsar if they liked, or he would voluntarily surrender himself for the sake of getting easier terms for his countrymen. The latter alternative was chosen. Vercingetorix then armed himself with his most splendid weapons, decked his horse with its richest trappings, and, after riding thrice round the Roman camp, went before Cæsar and laid at his feet the sword which was the sole remaining defence of Gallic independence. Cæsar sent him to Rome, where he lay in prison for six years, and was finally put to death when Cæsar celebrated his triumph.

But the Celtic love of splendour and of art were mixed with much barbarism. Strabo tells us how the warriors rode home from victory with the heads of fallen foemen dangling from their horses' necks, just as in the Irish saga the Ulster hero, Cuchulain, is represented as driving back to Emania from a foray into Connacht with the heads of his enemies hanging from his chariot-rim. Their domestic arrangements were rude; they lay on the ground to sleep, sat on couches of straw, and their women worked in the fields.

### **Polybius**

A characteristic scene from the battle of Clastidium (222 B.C.) is recorded by Polybius. The Gæsati,<sup>19</sup> he tells us, who were in the forefront of the Celtic army, stripped naked for the fight, and the sight of these warriors, with their great stature and their fair skins, on which glittered the collars and bracelets of gold so loved as an adornment by all the Celts, filled the Roman legionaries with awe. Yet when the day was over those golden ornaments went in cartloads to deck the Capitol of Rome; and the final comment of Polybius on the character of the Celts is that they, "I say not usually, but always, in everything they attempt, are driven headlong by their passions, and never submit to the laws of reason." As might be expected, the chastity for which the Germans were noted was never, until recent times, a Celtic characteristic.

### **Diodorus**

Diodorus Siculus, a contemporary of Julius Cæsar and Augustus, who had travelled in Gaul, confirms in the main the accounts of Cæsar and Strabo, but adds some interesting details. He notes in particular the Gallic love of gold. Even cuirasses were made of it. This is also a very notable trait in Celtic Ireland, where an astonishing number of prehistoric gold relics have been found, while many more, now lost, are known to have existed. The temples and sacred places, say Posidonius and Diodorus, were full of unguarded offerings of gold, which no one ever touched. He mentions the

great reverence paid to the bards, and, like Cato, notices something peculiar about the kind of speech which the educated Gauls cultivated: “they are not a talkative people, and are fond of expressing themselves in enigmas, so that the hearer has to divine the most part of what they would say.” This exactly answers to the literary language of ancient Ireland, which is curt and allusive to a degree. The Druid was regarded as the prescribed intermediary between God and man—no one could perform a religious act without his assistance.

### **Ammianus Marcellinus**

Ammianus Marcellinus, who wrote much later, in the latter half of the fourth century A.D., had also visited Gaul, which was then, of course, much Romanised. He tells us, however, like former writers, of the great stature, fairness, and arrogant bearing of the Gallic warrior. He adds that the people, especially in Aquitaine, were singularly clean and proper in their persons—no one was to be seen in rags. The Gallic woman he describes as very tall, blue-eyed, and singularly beautiful; but a certain amount of awe is mingled with his evident admiration, for he tells us that while it was dangerous enough to get into a fight with a Gallic man, your case was indeed desperate if his wife with her “huge snowy arms,” which could strike like catapults, came to his assistance. One is irresistibly reminded of the gallery of vigorous, independent, fiery-hearted women, like Maeve, Grania, Findabair, Deirdre, and the historic Boadicea, who figure in the myths and in the history of the British Islands.

### **Rice Holmes on the Gauls**

The following passage from Dr. Rice Holmes' “Cæsar's Conquest of Gaul” may be taken as an admirable summary of the social physiognomy of that part of Celtica a little before the time of the Christian era, and it corresponds closely to all that is known of the native Irish civilisation:

“The Gallic peoples had risen far above the condition of savages; and the Celticans of the interior, many of whom had already fallen under Roman influence, had attained a certain degree of civilisation, and even of luxury. Their trousers, from which the province took its name of Gallia Bracata, and their many-coloured tartan skirts and cloaks excited the astonishment of their conquerors. The chiefs wore rings and bracelets and necklaces of gold; and when these tall, fair-haired warriors rode forth to battle, with their helmets wrought in the shape of some fierce beast's head, and surmounted by nodding plumes, their chain armour, their long bucklers and their huge clanking swords, they made a splendid show. Walled towns or large villages, the strongholds of the various tribes, were conspicuous on numerous hills. The plains were dotted by scores of open hamlets. The houses, built of timber and wickerwork, were large and well thatched. The fields in summer were yellow with corn. Roads ran from town to town. Rude bridges spanned the rivers; and barges laden with merchandise floated along them. Ships clumsy indeed but larger than any that were seen on the Mediterranean, braved the storms of the Bay of Biscay and carried cargoes between the ports of Brittany and the coast of Britain. Tolls were exacted on the goods which were transported on the great waterways; and it was from the farming of these dues that the nobles derived a large part of their wealth. Every tribe had its coinage; and the knowledge of writing in Greek and Roman characters was not confined to the priests. The Æduans were familiar with the plating of copper and of tin. The miners of Aquitaine, of Auvergne, and of the Berri were celebrated for their skill. Indeed, in all that belonged to outward prosperity the peoples of Gaul had made great strides since their kinsmen first came into contact with Rome.”<sup>20</sup>

## **The Classical State**

At the root of the success of classical nations lay the conception of the civic community, the *πόλις*, the *res publica*, as a kind of divine entity, the foundation of blessing to men, venerable for its age, yet renewed in youth with every generation; a power which a man might joyfully serve, knowing that even if not remembered in its records his faithful service would outlive his own petty life and go to exalt the life of his motherland or city for all future time. In this spirit Socrates, when urged to evade his death sentence by taking the means of escape from prison which his friends offered him, rebuked them for inciting him to an impious violation of his country's laws. For a man's country, he says, is more holy and venerable than father or mother, and he must quietly obey the laws, to which he has assented by living under them all his life, or incur the just wrath of their great Brethren, the Laws of the Underworld, before whom, in the end, he must answer for his conduct on earth. In a greater or less degree this exalted conception of the State formed the practical religion of every man among the classical nations of antiquity, and gave to the State its cohesive power, its capability of endurance and of progress.

## **Teutonic Loyalty**

With the Teuton the cohesive force was supplied by another motive, one which was destined to mingle with the civic motive and to form, in union with it—and often in predominance over it—the main political factor in the development of the European nations. This was the sentiment of what the Germans called *Treue*, the personal fidelity to a chief, which in very early times extended itself to a royal dynasty, a sentiment rooted profoundly in the Teutonic nature, and one which has never been surpassed by any other human impulse as the source of heroic self-sacrifice.

## **Celtic Religion**

No human influences are ever found pure and unmixed. The sentiment of personal fidelity was not unknown to the classical nations. The sentiment of civic patriotism, though of slow growth among the Teutonic tribes, did eventually establish itself there. Neither sentiment was unknown to the Celt, but there was another force which, in his case, overshadowed and dwarfed them, and supplied what it could of the political inspiration and unifying power which the classical nations got from patriotism and the Teutons from loyalty. This was Religion; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say Sacerdotalism—religion codified in dogma and administered by a priestly caste. The Druids, as we have seen from Cæsar, whose observations are entirely confirmed by Strabo and by references in Irish legends,<sup>21</sup> were the really sovran power in Celtica. All affairs, public and private, were subject to their authority, and the penalties which they could inflict for any assertion of lay independence, though resting for their efficacy, like the mediæval interdicts of the Catholic Church, on popular superstition alone, were enough to quell the proudest spirit. Here lay the real weakness of the Celtic polity. There is perhaps no law written more conspicuously in the teachings of history than that nations who are ruled by priests drawing their authority from supernatural sanctions are, just in the measure that they are so ruled, incapable of true national progress. The free, healthy current of secular life and thought is, in the very nature of things, incompatible with priestly rule. Be the creed what it may, Druidism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, or fetichism, a priestly caste claiming authority in temporal affairs by virtue of extra-temporal sanctions is inevitably the enemy of that spirit of criticism, of that influx of new ideas, of that growth of secular thought, of human and rational authority, which are the elementary conditions of national development.

### **The Cursing of Tara**

A singular and very cogent illustration of this truth can be drawn from the history of the early Celtic world. In the sixth century A.D., a little over a hundred years after the preaching of Christianity by St. Patrick, a king

named Dermot MacKervall<sup>22</sup> ruled in Ireland. He was the Ard Righ, or High King, of that country, whose seat of government was at Tara, in Meath, and whose office, with its nominal and legal superiority to the five provincial kings, represented the impulse which was moving the Irish people towards a true national unity. The first condition of such a unity was evidently the establishment of an effective central authority. Such an authority, as we have said, the High King, in theory, represented. Now it happened that one of his officers was murdered in the discharge of his duty by a chief named Hugh Guairy. Guairy was the brother of a bishop who was related by fosterage to St. Ruadan of Lorrha, and when King Dermot sent to arrest the murderer these clergy found him a hiding-place. Dermot, however, caused a search to be made, haled him forth from under the roof of St. Ruadan, and brought him to Tara for trial. Immediately the ecclesiastics of Ireland made common cause against the lay ruler who had dared to execute justice on a criminal under clerical protection. They assembled at Tara, fasted against the king,<sup>23</sup> and laid their solemn malediction upon him and the seat of his government. Then the chronicler tells us that Dermot's wife had a prophetic dream:

“Upon Tara's green was a vast and wide-foliaged tree, and eleven slaves hewing at it; but every chip that they knocked from it would return into its place again and there adhere instantly, till at last there came one man that dealt the tree but a stroke, and with that single cut laid it low.”<sup>24</sup>

The fair tree was the Irish monarchy, the twelve hewers were the twelve Saints or Apostles of Ireland, and the one who laid it low was St. Ruadan. The plea of the king for his country, whose fate he saw to be hanging in the balance, is recorded with moving force and insight by the Irish chronicler:<sup>25</sup>

“‘Alas,’ he said, ‘for the iniquitous contest that ye have waged against me; seeing that it is Ireland's good that I pursue, and to preserve her discipline and royal right; but 'tis



Ireland's unpeace and murderousness that ye endeavour after.'”

But Ruadan said, “Desolate be Tara for ever and ever”; and the popular awe of the ecclesiastical malediction prevailed. The criminal was surrendered, Tara was abandoned, and, except for a brief space when a strong usurper, Brian Boru, fought his way to power, Ireland knew no effective secular government till it was imposed upon her by a conqueror. The last words of the historical tract from which we quote are Dermot's cry of despair:

“Woe to him that with the clergy of the churches battle joins.”

This remarkable incident has been described at some length because it is typical of a factor whose profound influence in moulding the history of the Celtic peoples we can trace through a succession of critical events from the time of Julius Caesar to the present day. How and whence it arose we shall consider later; here it is enough to call attention to it. It is a factor which forbade the national development of the Celts, in the sense in which we can speak of that of the classical or the Teutonic peoples.

### **What Europe Owes to the Celt**

Yet to suppose that on this account the Celt was not a force of any real consequence in Europe would be altogether a mistake. His contribution to the culture of the Western world was a very notable one. For some four centuries—about A.D. 500 to 900—Ireland was the refuge of learning and the source of literary and philosophic culture for half Europe. The verse-forms of Celtic poetry have probably played the main part in determining the structure of all modern verse. The myths and legends of the Gaelic and Cymric peoples kindled the imagination of a host of Continental poets. True, the Celt did not himself create any great architectural work of literature, just as he did not create a stable or imposing national polity. His

thinking and feeling were essentially lyrical and concrete. Each object or aspect of life impressed him vividly and stirred him profoundly; he was sensitive, impressionable to the last degree, but did not see things in their larger and more far-reaching relations. He had little gift for the establishment or institutions, for the service of principles; but he was, and is, an indispensable and never-failing assertor of humanity as against the tyranny of principles, the coldness and barrenness of institutions. The institutions of royalty and of civic patriotism are both very capable of being fossilised into barren formulae, and thus of fettering instead of inspiring the soul. But the Celt has always been a rebel against anything that has not in it the breath of life, against any unspiritual and purely external form of domination. It is too true that he has been over-eager to enjoy the fine fruits of life without the long and patient preparation for the harvest, but he has done and will still do infinite service to the modern world in insisting that the true fruit of life is a spiritual reality, never without pain and loss to be obscured or forgotten amid the vast mechanism of a material civilisation.

1. He speaks of "Nyrax, a Celtic city," and "Massalia (Marseilles), a city of Liguria in the land of the Celts" ("Fragmenta Hist. Græc.").
2. In his "Premiers Habitants de l'Europe," vol. ii.
3. See for these names Holder's "Altceltischer Sprachschatz."
4. Vergil might possibly mean "the very-bright" or illustrious one, a natural form for a proper name. *Ver* in Gallic names (Vercingetorix, Vercassivellamus, &c.) is often an intensive prefix, like the modern Irish *fíor*. The name of the village where Vergil was born, Andes (now Pietola), is Celtic. His love of nature, his mysticism, and his strong feeling for a certain decorative quality in language and rhythm are markedly Celtic qualities. Tennyson's phrases for him, "landscape-lover, lord of language," are suggestive in this connexion.
5. Ptolemy, a friend, and probably, indeed, half-brother, of Alexander, was doubtless present when this incident took place. His work has not survived, but is quoted by Arrian and other historians.
6. One is reminded of the folk-tale about Henny Penny, who went to tell the king that the sky was falling.
7. The Book of Leinster is a manuscript of the twelfth century. The version of the "Táin" given in it probably dates from the eighth. See de Jubainville, "Premiers Habitants," ii. 316.
8. Dr. Douglas Hyde in his "Literary History of Ireland" (p. 7) gives a slightly different translation.
9. It is also a testimony to the close accuracy of the narrative of Ptolemy.

- [10.](#) Roman history tells of various conflicts with the Celts during this period, but de Jubainville has shown that these narratives are almost entirely mythical. See “Premiers Habitants,” ii. 318-323.
- [11.](#) *E.g.*, Moymell (*magh-meala*), the Plain of Honey, a Gaelic name for Fairyland, and many place-names.
- [12.](#) For these and many other examples see de Jubainville's “Premiers Habitants,” ii. 255 *sqq.*
- [13.](#) Quoted by Mr. Romilly Allen in “Celtic Art,” p. 136.
- [14.](#) “Premiers Habitants,” ii. 355, 356.
- [15.](#) Irish is probably an older form of Celtic speech than Welsh. This is shown by many philological peculiarities of the Irish language, of which one of the most interesting may here be briefly referred to. The Goidelic or Gaelic Celts, who, according to the usual theory, first colonised the British Islands, and who were forced by successive waves of invasion by their Continental kindred to the extreme west, had a peculiar dislike to the pronunciation of the letter *p*. Thus the Indo-European particle *pare*, represented by Greek *παρά*, beside or close to, becomes in early Celtic *are*, as in the name *Are-morici* (the Armoricans, those who dwell *ar muir*, by the sea); *Are-dunum* (Ardin, in France); *Are-cluta*, the place beside the Clota (Clyde), now Dumbarton; *Are-taunon*, in Germany (near the Taunus Mountains), &c. When this letter was not simply dropped it was usually changed into *c* (*k*, *g*). But about the sixth century B.C. a remarkable change passed over the language of the Continental Celts. They gained in some unexplained way the faculty for pronouncing *p*, and even substituted it for existing *c* sounds; thus the original *Cretanis* became *Pretanis*, Britain, the numeral *qetuares* (four) became *petuares*, and so forth. Celtic place-names in Spain show that this change must have taken place before the Celtic conquest of that country, 500 B.C. Now a comparison of many Irish and Welsh words shows distinctly this avoidance of *p* on the Irish side and lack of any objection to it on the Welsh. The following are a few illustrations:

<i>Irish</i>	<i>Welsh</i>	<i>English</i>
crann	prenn	tree
mac	map	ton
cenn	pen	head
clumh (cluv)	pluv	feather
cúig	pimp	five

The conclusion that Irish must represent the older form of the language seems obvious. It is remarkable that even to a comparatively late date the Irish preserved their dislike to *p*. Thus they turned the Latin *Pascha* (Easter) to *Casg*; *purpur*, purple, to *corcair*, *pulsatio* (through French

*pouls*) to *cuisse*. It must be noted, however, that Nicholson in his “Keltic Researches” endeavours to show that the so-called Indo-European *p*—that is, *p* standing alone and uncombined with another consonant—was pronounced by the Goidelic Celts at an early period. The subject can hardly be said to be cleared up yet.

[16.](#) The Irish, says Edmund Spenser, in his “View of the Present State of Ireland,” “use commonyle to send up and down to know newes, and yf any meet with another, his second woorde is, What newes?”

[17.](#) Compare Spenser: “I have heard some greate warriors say, that in all the services which they had seen abroad in forrayne countreys, they never saw a more comely horseman than the Irish man, nor that cometh on more bravely in his charge ... they are very valiante and hardye, for the most part great endurours of cold, labour, hunger and all hardiness, very active and stronge of hand, very swift of foote, very vigilaunte and circumspect in theyr enterprises, very present in perrils, very great scornors of death.”

[18.](#) The scene of the surrender of Vercingetorix is not recounted by Cæsar, and rests mainly on the authority of Plutarch and of the historian Florus, but it is accepted by scholars (Mommsen, Long, &c.) as historic.

[19.](#) These were a tribe who took their name from the *gæsum*, a kind of Celtic javelin, which was their principal weapon. The torque, or twisted collar of gold, is introduced as a typical ornament in the well-known statue of the dying Gaul, commonly called “The Dying Gladiator.” Many examples are preserved in the National Museum of Dublin.

[20.](#) “Cæsar's Conquest of Gaul,” pp. 10, 11. Let it be added that the aristocratic Celts were, like the Teutons, dolichocephalic—that is to say, they had heads long in proportion to their breadth. This is proved by remains found in the basin of the Marne, which was thickly populated by them. In one case the skeleton of the tall Gallic warrior was found with his war-car, iron helmet, and sword, now in the Musée de St.-Germain. The inhabitants of the British Islands are uniformly long-headed, the round-headed “Alpine” type occurring very rarely. Those of modern France are round-headed. The shape of the head, however, is now known to be by no means a constant racial character. It alters rapidly in a new environment, as is shown by measurements of the descendants of immigrants in America. See an article on this subject by Professor Haddon in “Nature,” Nov. 3, 1910.

[21.](#) In the “Tain Bo Cuailgne,” for instance, the King of Ulster must not speak to a messenger until the Druid, Cathbad, has questioned him. One recalls the lines of Sir Samuel Ferguson in his Irish epic poem, “Congal”:

“... For ever since the time When Cathbad smothered Usnach's sons in  
that foul sea of slime Raised by abominable spells at Creeveroe's  
bloody gate, Do ruin and dishonour still on priest-led kings await.”

[22.](#) *Celtice*, Diarmuid mac Cearbhaill.

- [23.](#) It was the practice, known in India also, for a person who was wronged by a superior, or thought himself so, to sit before the doorstep of the denier of justice and fast until right was done him. In Ireland a magical power was attributed to the ceremony, the effect of which would be averted by the other person fasting as well.
- [24.](#) “Silva Gadelica,” by S.H. O’Grady, p. 73.
- [25.](#) The authority here quoted is a narrative contained in a fifteenth-century vellum manuscript found in Lismore Castle in 1814, and translated by S.H. O’Grady in his “Silva Gadelica.” The narrative is attributed to an officer of Dermot’s court.

# Religion

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# **The Religion of the Celts**

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## **Ireland and the Celtic Religion**

We have said that the Irish among the Celtic peoples possess the unique interest of having carried into the light of modern historical research many of the features of a native Celtic civilisation. There is, however, one thing which they did not carry across the gulf which divides us from the ancient world—and this was their religion.

It was not merely that they changed it; they left it behind them so entirely that all record of it is lost. St. Patrick, himself a Celt, who apostolised Ireland during the fifth century, has left us an autobiographical narrative of his mission, a document of intense interest, and the earliest extant record of British Christianity; but in it he tells us nothing of the doctrines he came to supplant. We learn far more of Celtic religious beliefs from Julius Cæsar, who approached them from quite another side. The copious legendary literature which took its present form in Ireland between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, though often manifestly going back to pre-Christian sources, shows us, beyond a belief in magic and a devotion to certain ceremonial or chivalric observances, practically nothing resembling a religious or even an ethical system. We know that certain chiefs and bards offered a long resistance to the new faith, and that this resistance came to the arbitrament of battle at Moyrath in the sixth century, but no echo of any intellectual controversy, no matching of one doctrine against another, such as we find, for instance, in the records of the controversy of Celsus with Origen, has reached us from this period of change and strife. The literature of ancient Ireland, as we shall see, embodied many ancient myths; and traces appear in it of beings who must, at one time, have been gods or elemental powers; but all has been emptied of religious significance and turned to romance and beauty. Yet not only was there, as Cæsar tells us, a very well-developed religious system among the Gauls, but we learn on the

same authority that the British Islands were the authoritative centre of this system; they were, so to speak, the Rome of the Celtic religion.

What this religion was like we have now to consider, as an introduction to the myths and tales which more or less remotely sprang from it.

## **The Popular Religion of the Celts**

But first we must point out that the Celtic religion was by no means a simple affair, and cannot be summed up as what we call “Druidism.” Beside the official religion there was a body of popular superstitions and observances which came from a deeper and older source than Druidism, and was destined long to outlive it—indeed, it is far from dead even yet.

## **The Megalithic People**

The religions of primitive peoples mostly centre on, or take their rise from, rites and practices connected with the burial of the dead. The earliest people inhabiting Celtic territory in the West of Europe of whom we have any distinct knowledge are a civilization without name or known history, but by their sepulchral monuments, of which so many still exist, we can learn a great deal about them. They were the so-called Megalithic People,<sup>1</sup> the builders of dolmens, cromlechs, and chambered tumuli, of which more than three thousand have been counted in France alone. Dolmens are found from Scandinavia southwards, all down the western lands of Europe to the Straits of Gibraltar, and round by the Mediterranean coast of Spain. They occur in some of the western islands of the Mediterranean, and are found in Greece, where, in Mycenæ, an ancient dolmen yet stands beside the magnificent burial-chamber of the Atreidae. Roughly, if we draw a line from the mouth of the Rhone northward to Varanger Fiord, one may say that, except for a few Mediterranean examples, all the dolmens in Europe lie to the west of that line. To the east none are found till we come into Asia. But they cross the Straits of Gibraltar, and are found all along the North African littoral, and thence eastwards through Arabia, India, and as far as Japan.



## **Dolmens, Cromlechs, and Tumuli**



Dolmen at Proleek, Ireland

A dolmen, it may be here explained, is a kind of chamber composed of upright unhewn stones, and roofed generally with a single huge stone. They are usually wedge-shaped in plan, and traces of a porch or vestibule can often be noticed. The primary intention of the dolmen was to represent a house or dwelling-place for the dead. A cromlech (often confused in popular language with the dolmen) is properly a circular arrangement of standing stones, often with a dolmen in their midst. It is believed that most if not all of the now exposed dolmens were originally covered with a great mound of earth or of smaller stones. Sometimes, as in the illustration we give from Carnac, in Brittany, great avenues or alignments are formed of single upright stones, and these, no doubt, had some purpose connected with the ritual of worship carried on in the locality. The later megalithic monuments, as at Stonehenge, may be of dressed stone, but in all cases their rudeness of construction, the absence of any sculpturing (except for patterns or symbols incised on the surface), the evident aim at creating a powerful impression by the brute strength of huge monolithic masses, as well as certain subsidiary features in their design which shall be described later on, give these megalithic monuments a curious family likeness and mark them out from the chambered tombs of the early Greeks, of the Egyptians, and of other more advanced civilizations. The dolmens proper gave place in the

end to great chambered mounds or tumuli, as at New Grange, which we also reckon as belonging to the Megalithic People. They are a natural development of the dolmen. The early dolmen-builders were in the neolithic stage of culture, their weapons were of polished stone. But in the tumuli not only stone, but also bronze, and even iron, instruments are found—at first evidently importations, but afterwards of local manufacture.

### **Origin of the Megalithic People**

The language originally spoken by this people can only be conjectured by the traces of it left in that of their conquerors, the Celts.<sup>2</sup> But a map of the distribution of their monuments irresistibly suggests the idea that their builders were of North African origin; that they were not at first accustomed to traverse the sea for any great distance; that they migrated westwards along North Africa, crossed into Europe where the Mediterranean at Gibraltar narrows to a strait of a few miles in width, and thence spread over the western regions of Europe, including the British Islands, while on the eastward they penetrated by Arabia into Asia. It must, however, be borne in mind that while originally, no doubt, a distinct ethnicity, the Megalithic People came in the end to represent, not ethnicity, but a culture. The human remains found in these sepulchres, with their wide divergence in the shape of the skull, &c., clearly prove this.<sup>3</sup> These and other relics testify to the dolmen-builders in general as representing a superior and well-developed type, acquainted with agriculture, pasturage, and to some extent with seafaring. The monuments themselves, which are often of imposing size and imply much thought and organised effort in their construction, show unquestionably the existence, at this period, of a priesthood charged with the care of funeral rites and capable of controlling large bodies of men. Their dead were, as a rule, not burned, but buried whole—the greater monuments marking, no doubt, the sepulchres of important personages, while the common people were buried in tombs of which no traces now exist.

## **The Celts of the Plains**

De Jubainville, in his account of the early history of the Celts, takes account of two main groups only—the Celts and the Megalithic People. But A. Bertrand, in his very valuable work “*La Religion des Gaulois*,” distinguishes two elements among the Celts themselves. There are, besides the Megalithic People, the two groups of lowland Celts and mountain Celts. The lowland Celts, according to his view, started from the Danube and entered Gaul probably about 1200 B.C. They were the founders of the lake-dwellings in Switzerland, in the Danube valley, and in Ireland. They knew the use of metals, and worked in gold, in tin, in bronze, and towards the end of their period in iron. Unlike the Megalithic People, they spoke a Celtic tongue,<sup>4</sup> though Bertrand seems to doubt their genuine racial affinity with the true Celts. They were perhaps Celticised rather than actually Celtic. They were not warlike; a quiet folk of herdsmen, tillers, and artificers. They did not bury, but burned their dead. At a great settlement of theirs, Golasecca, in Cisalpine Gaul, 6000 interments were found. In each case the body had been burned; there was not a single burial without previous burning.

This people entered Gaul not (according to Bertrand), for the most part, as conquerors, but by gradual infiltration, occupying vacant spaces wherever they found them along the valleys and plains. They came by the passes of the Alps, and their starting-point was the country of the Upper Danube, which Herodotus says “rises among the Celts.” They blended peacefully with the Megalithic People among whom they settled, and did not evolve any of those advanced political institutions which are only nursed in war, but probably they contributed powerfully to the development of the Druidical system of religion and to the bardic poetry.

## **The Celts of the Mountains**

Finally, we have a third group, the true Celtic group, which followed closely on the track of the second. It was at the beginning of the sixth

century that it first made its appearance on the left bank of the Rhine. While Bertrand calls the second group Celtic, these he styles Galatic, and identifies them with the Galatæ of the Greeks and the Galli and Belgæ of the Romans.

The second group, as we have said, were Celts of the plains. The third were Celts of the mountains. The earliest home in which we know them was the ranges of the Balkans and Carpathians. Their organisation was that of a military aristocracy—they lorded it over the subject populations on whom they lived by tribute or pillage. They are the warlike Celts of ancient history—the sackers of Rome and Delphi, the mercenary warriors who fought for pay and for the love of warfare in the ranks of Carthage and afterwards of Rome. Agriculture and industry were despised by them, their women tilled the ground, and under their rule the common population became reduced almost to servitude; “plebs pœne servorum habetur loco,” as Caesar tells us. Ireland alone escaped in some degree from the oppression of this military aristocracy, and from the sharp dividing line which it drew between the classes, yet even there a reflexion of the state of things in Gaul is found, even there we find free and unfree tribes and oppressive and dishonouring exactions on the part of the ruling order.

Yet, if this ruling civilization had some of the vices of untamed strength, they had also many noble and humane qualities. They were dauntlessly brave, fantastically chivalrous, keenly sensitive to the appeal of poetry, of music, and of speculative thought. Posidonius found the bardic institution flourishing among them about 100 B.C., and about two hundred years earlier Hecatæus of Abdera describes the elaborate musical services held by the Celts in a Western island—probably Great Britain—in honour of their god Apollo (Lugh).<sup>5</sup> Aryan of the Aryans, they had in them the making of a great and progressive nation; but the Druidic system—not on the side of its philosophy and science, but on that of its ecclesiastico-political organisation—was their bane, and their submission to it was their fatal weakness.

The culture of these mountain Celts differed markedly from that of the lowlanders. Their age was the age of iron, not of bronze; their dead were not burned (which they considered a disgrace), but buried.

The territories occupied by them in force were Switzerland, Burgundy, the Palatinate, and Northern France, parts of Britain to the west, and Illyria and Galatia to the east, but smaller groups of them must have penetrated far and wide through all Celtic territory, and taken up a ruling position wherever they went.

There were three peoples, said Cæsar, inhabiting Gaul when his conquest began; “they differ from each other in language, in customs, and in laws.” These people he named respectively the Belgæ, the Celtæ, and the Aquitani. He locates them roughly, the Belgæ in the north and east, the Celtæ in the middle, and the Aquitani in the west and south. The Belgæ are the Galatæ of Bertrand, the Celtæ are the Celts, and the Aquitani are the Megalithic People. They had, of course, all been more or less brought under Celtic influences, and the differences of language which Cæsar noticed need not have been great; still it is noteworthy, and quite in accordance with Bertrand's views, that Strabo speaks of the Aquitani as differing markedly from the rest of the inhabitants, and as resembling the Iberians. The language of the other Gaulish peoples, he expressly adds, were merely dialects of the same tongue.

### **The Religion of Magic**

This triple division is reflected more or less in all the Celtic countries, and must always be borne in mind when we speak of Celtic ideas and Celtic religion, and try to estimate the contribution of the Celtic peoples to European culture. The mythical literature and the art of the Celt have probably sprung mainly from the section represented by the Lowland Celts of Bertrand. But this literature of song and saga was produced by a bardic class for the pleasure and instruction of a proud, chivalrous, and warlike aristocracy, and would thus inevitably be moulded by the ideas of this aristocracy. But it would also have been coloured by the profound influence of the religious beliefs and observances entertained by the Megalithic People—beliefs which are only now fading slowly away in the spreading daylight of science. These beliefs may be summed up in the one term

Magic. The nature of this religion of magic must now be briefly discussed, for it was a potent element in the formation of the body of myths and legends with which we have afterwards to deal.

The ultimate root of the word Magic is unknown, but proximately it is derived from the Magi, or priests of Chaldea and Media in pre-Aryan and pre-Semitic times, who were the great exponents of this system of thought, so strangely mingled of superstition, philosophy, and scientific observation. The fundamental conception of magic is that of the spiritual vitality of all nature. This spiritual vitality was not, as in polytheism, conceived as separated from nature in distinct divine personalities. It was implicit and immanent in nature; obscure, undefined, invested with all the awfulness of a power whose limits and nature are enveloped in impenetrable mystery. In its remote origin it was doubtless, as many facts appear to show, associated with the cult of the dead, for death was looked upon as the resumption into nature, and as the investment with vague and uncontrollable powers, of a spiritual force formerly embodied in the concrete, limited, manageable, and therefore less awful form of a living human personality. Yet these powers were not altogether uncontrollable. The desire for control, as well as the suggestion of the means for achieving it, probably arose from the first rude practices of the art of healing. Medicine of some sort was one of the earliest necessities of man. And the power of certain natural substances, mineral or vegetable, to produce bodily and mental effects often of a most startling character would naturally be taken as signal evidence of what we may call the “magical” conception of the universe.<sup>6</sup> The first magicians were those who attained a special knowledge of healing or poisonous herbs; but “virtue” of some sort being attributed to every natural object and phenomenon, a kind of magical science, partly the child of true research, partly of poetic imagination, partly of priestcraft, would in time spring up, would be codified into rites and formulas, attached to special places and objects, and represented by symbols. The whole subject has been treated by Pliny in a remarkable passage which deserves quotation at length:

### **Pliny on the Religion of Magic**

“Magic is one of the few things which it is important to discuss at some length, were it only because, being the most delusive of all the arts, it has everywhere and at all times been most powerfully credited. Nor need it surprise us that it has obtained so vast an influence, for it has united in itself the three arts which have wielded the most powerful sway over the spirit of man. Springing in the first instance from Medicine—a fact which no one can doubt—and under cover of a solicitude for our health, it has glided into the mind, and taken the form of another medicine, more holy and more profound. In the second place, bearing the most seductive and flattering promises, it has enlisted the motive of Religion, the subject on which, even at this day, mankind is most in the dark. To crown all it has had recourse to the art of Astrology; and every man is eager to know the future and convinced that this knowledge is most certainly to be obtained from the heavens. Thus, holding the minds of men enchained in this triple bond, it has extended its sway over many nations, and the Kings of Kings obey it in the East.

“In the East, doubtless, it was invented—in Persia and by Zoroaster.<sup>7</sup> All the authorities agree in this. But has there not been more than one Zoroaster?... I have noticed that in ancient times, and indeed almost always, one finds men seeking in this science the climax of literary glory—at least Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, and Plato crossed the seas, exiles, in truth, rather than travellers, to instruct themselves in this. Returning to their native land, they vaunted the claims of magic and maintained its secret doctrine.... In the Latin nations there are early traces of it, as, for instance, in our Laws of the Twelve Tables<sup>8</sup> and other monuments, as I have said in a former book. In fact, it was not until the year 657 after the foundation of Rome, under the consulate of Cornelius Lentulus Crassus, that it was forbidden by a *senatus consultum* to sacrifice human beings; a fact which proves that up to this date these horrible sacrifices were made. The Gauls

have been captivated by it, and that even down to our own times, for it was the Emperor Tiberius who suppressed the Druids and all the herd of prophets and medicine-men. But what is the use of launching prohibitions against an art which has thus traversed the ocean and penetrated even to the confines of Nature?" (*Hist. Nat.* xxx.)

Pliny adds that the first person whom he can ascertain to have written on this subject was Osthanes, who accompanied Xerxes in his war against the Greeks, and who propagated the "germs of his monstrous art" wherever he went in Europe.

Magic was not—so Pliny believed—indigenous either in Greece or in Italy, but was so much at home in Britain and conducted with such elaborate ritual that Pliny says it would almost seem as if it was they who had taught it to the Persians, not the Persians to them.

### **Traces of Magic in Megalithic Monuments**

The imposing relics of their cult which the Megalithic People have left us are full of indications of their religion. Take, for instance, the remarkable tumulus of Mané-er-H'oeck, in Brittany. This monument was explored in 1864 by M. René Galles, who describes it as absolutely intact—the surface of the earth unbroken, and everything as the builders left it.<sup>9</sup> At the entrance to the rectangular chamber was a sculptured slab, on which was graven a mysterious sign, perhaps the totem of a chief. Immediately on entering the chamber was found a beautiful pendant in green jasper about the size of an egg. On the floor in the centre of the chamber was a most singular arrangement, consisting of a large ring of jadite, slightly oval in shape, with a magnificent axe-head, also of jadite, its point resting on the ring. The axe was a well-known symbol of power or godhead, and is frequently found in rock-carvings of the Bronze Age, as well as in Egyptian hieroglyphs, Minoan carvings, &c. At a little distance from these there lay two large pendants of jasper, then an axe-head in white jade,<sup>10</sup> then another jasper pendant. All these objects were ranged with evident intention *en suite*, forming a straight line which coincided exactly with one of the diagonals of



the chamber, running from north-west to south-east. In one of the corners of the chamber were found 101 axe-heads in jade, jadite, and fibrolite. There were no traces of bones or cinders, no funerary urn; the structure was a cenotaph. "Are we not here," asks Bertrand, "in presence of some ceremony relating to the practices of magic?"

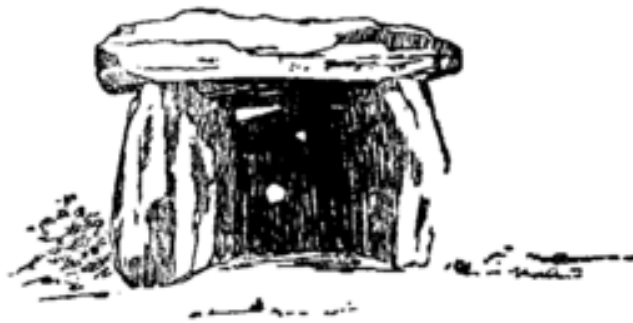
### **Chiromancy at Gavr'inis**

In connexion with the great sepulchral monument of Gavr'inis a very curious observation was made by M. Albert Maitre, an inspector of the Musée des Antiquités Nationales. There were found here—as commonly in other megalithic monuments in Ireland and Scotland—a number of stones sculptured with a singular and characteristic design in waving and concentric lines. Now if the curious lines traced upon the human hand at the roots and tips of the fingers be examined under a lens, it will be found that they bear an exact resemblance to these designs of megalithic sculpture. One seems almost like a cast of the other. These lines on the human hand are so distinct and peculiar that, as is well known, they have been adopted as a method of identification of criminals. Can this resemblance be the result of chance? Nothing like these peculiar assemblages of sculptured lines has ever been found except in connexion with these monuments. Have we not here a reference to chiromancy—a magical art much practised in ancient and even in modern times? The hand as a symbol of power was a well-known magical emblem, and has entered largely even into Christian symbolism—note, for instance, the great hand sculptured on the under side of one of the arms of the Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice.



Stones from Brittany sculptured with Footprints, Axes, "Finger-markings,"  
&c.

### **Holed Stones**



Dolmen at Trie, France

Another singular and as yet unexplained feature which appears in many of these monuments, from Western Europe to India, is the presence of a small hole bored through one of the stones composing the chamber. Was it an aperture intended for the spirit of the dead? or for offerings to them? or the channel through which revelations from the spirit-world were supposed to come to a priest or magician? or did it partake of all these characters? Holed stones, not forming part of a dolmen, are, of course, among the commonest relics of the ancient cult, and are still venerated and used in

practices connected with child-bearing, &c. Here we are doubtless to interpret the emblem as a symbol of sex.

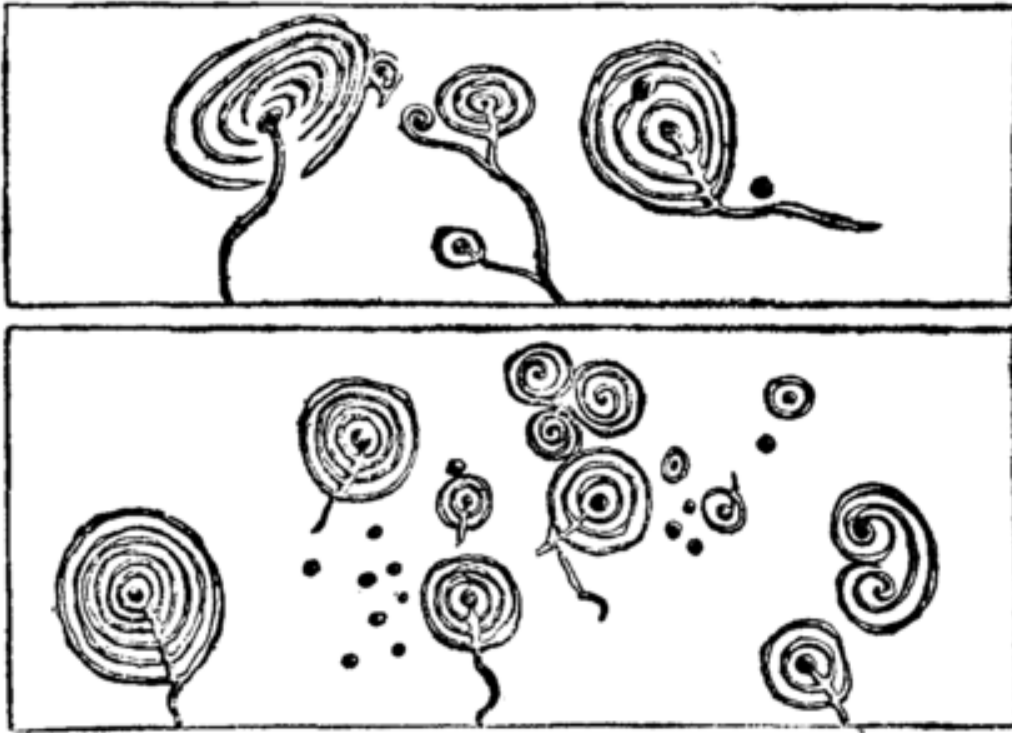


Dolmens in the Deccan, India

### **Stone-Worship**

Besides the heavenly bodies, we find that rivers, trees, mountains, and stones were all objects of veneration among this primitive people. Stone-worship was particularly common, and is not so easily explained as the worship directed toward objects possessing movement and vitality. Possibly an explanation of the veneration attaching to great and isolated masses of unhewn stone may be found in their resemblance to the artificial dolmens and cromlechs.<sup>11</sup> No superstition has proved more enduring. In A.D. 452 we find the Synod of Arles denouncing those who “venerate trees and wells and stones,” and the denunciation was repeated by Charlemagne, and by numerous Synods and Councils down to recent times. Yet a drawing, here reproduced, which was lately made on the spot by Mr. Arthur Bell<sup>12</sup> shows this very act of worship still in full force in Brittany, and shows the symbols and the sacerdotal organisation of Christianity actually pressed into the service of this immemorial paganism. According to Mr. Bell, the clergy take part in these performances with much reluctance, but are compelled to do so by the force of local opinion. Holy wells, the water of which is supposed to cure diseases, are still very common in Ireland, and the cult of the waters of Lourdes may, in spite of its adoption by the Church, be mentioned as a notable case in point on the Continent.

## Cup-and-Ring Markings



Cup-and-ring Markings from Scotland

Another singular emblem, upon the meaning of which no light has yet been thrown, occurs frequently in connexion with megalithic monuments. The accompanying illustrations show examples of it. Cup-shaped hollows are made in the surface of the stone, these are often surrounded with concentric rings, and from the cup one or more radial lines are drawn to a point outside the circumference of the rings. Occasionally a system of cups are joined by these lines, but more frequently they end a little way outside the widest of the rings. These strange markings are found in Great Britain and Ireland, in Brittany, and at various places in India, where they are called *mahadéos*.<sup>13</sup> I have also found a curious example—for such it appears to be—in Dupaix' "Monuments of New Spain." It is reproduced in Lord Kingsborough's "Antiquities of Mexico," vol. iv. On the circular top of a cylindrical stone, known as the "Triumphal Stone," is carved a central cup, with nine concentric circles round it, and a duct or channel cut straight from

the cup through all the circles to the rim. Except that the design here is richly decorated and accurately drawn, it closely resembles a typical European cup-and-ring marking. That these markings mean something, and that, wherever they are found, they mean the same thing, can hardly be doubted, but what that meaning is remains yet a puzzle to antiquarians. The guess may perhaps be hazarded that they are diagrams or plans of a megalithic sepulchre. The central hollow represents the actual burial-place. The circles are the standing stones, fosses, and ramparts which often surrounded it; and the line or duct drawn from the centre outwards represents the subterranean approach to the sepulchre. The apparent “avenue” intention of the duct is clearly brought out in the varieties given below, which I take from Simpson. As the sepulchre was also a holy place or shrine, the occurrence of a representation of it among other carvings of a sacred character is natural enough; it would seem symbolically to indicate that the place was holy ground. How far this suggestion might apply to the Mexican example I am unable to say.



Varieties of Cup-and-ring Markings

### **The Tumulus at New Grange**

One of the most important and richly sculptured of European megalithic monuments is the great chambered tumulus of New Grange, on the northern bank of the Boyne, in Ireland. This tumulus, and the others which occur in its neighbourhood, appear in ancient Irish mythical literature in two different characters, the union of which is significant. They are regarded on the one hand as the dwelling-places of the *Sidhe* (pronounced Shee), or Fairy Folk, who represent, probably, the deities of the ancient Irish, and

they are also, traditionally, the burial-places of the Celtic High Kings of pagan Ireland. The story of the burial of King Cormac, who was supposed to have heard of the Christian faith long before it was actually preached in Ireland by St. Patrick and who ordered that he should not be buried at the royal cemetery by the Boyne, on account of its pagan associations, points to the view that this place was the centre of a pagan cult involving more than merely the interment of royal personages in its precincts. Unfortunately these monuments are not intact; they were opened and plundered by the Danes in the ninth century,<sup>14</sup> but enough evidence remains to show that they were sepulchral in their origin, and were also associated with the cult of a primitive religion. The most important of them, the tumulus of New Grange, has been thoroughly explored and described by Mr. George Coffey, keeper of the collection of Celtic antiquities in the National Museum, Dublin.<sup>15</sup> It appears from the outside like a large mound, or knoll, now overgrown with bushes. It measures about 280 feet across, at its greatest diameter, and is about 44 feet in height. Outside it there runs a wide circle of standing stones originally, it would seem, thirty-five in number. Inside this circle is a ditch and rampart, and on top of this rampart was laid a circular curb of great stones 8 to 10 feet long, laid on edge, and confining what has proved to be a huge mound of loose stones, now overgrown, as we have said, with grass and bushes. It is in the interior of this mound that the interest of the monument lies. Towards the end of the seventeenth century some workmen who were getting road-material from the mound came across the entrance to a passage which led into the interior, and was marked by the fact that the boundary stone below it is richly carved with spirals and lozenges. This entrance faces exactly south-east. The passage is formed of upright slabs of unhewn stone roofed with similar slabs, and varies from nearly 5 feet to 7 feet 10 inches in height; it is about 3 feet wide, and runs for 62 feet straight into the heart of the mound. Here it ends in a cruciform chamber, 20 feet high, the roof, a kind of dome, being formed of large flat stones, overlapping inwards till they almost meet at the top, where a large flat stone covers all. In each of the three recesses of the cruciform chamber

there stands a large stone basin, or rude sarcophagus, but not traces of any burial now remains.

### **Symbolic Carvings at New Grange**

The stones are all raw and undressed, and were selected for their purpose from the river-bed and elsewhere close by. On their flat surfaces, obtained by splitting slabs from the original quarries, are found the carvings which form the unique interest of this strange monument. Except for the large stone with spiral carvings and one other at the entrance to the mound, the intention of these sculptures does not appear to have been decorative, except in a very rude and primitive sense. There is no attempt to cover a given surface with a system of ornament appropriate to its size and shape. The designs are, as it were, scribbled upon the walls anyhow and anywhere.<sup>16</sup> Among them everywhere the spiral is prominent. The resemblance of some of these carvings to the supposed finger-markings of the stones at Gavrinis is very remarkable. Triple and double spiral are also found, as well as lozenges and zigzags. A singular carving representing what looks like a palm-branch or fern-leaf is found in the west recess. The drawing of this object is naturalistic, and it is hard to interpret it, as Mr. Coffey is inclined to do, as merely a piece of so-called "herring-bone" pattern.<sup>17</sup> A similar palm-leaf design, but with the ribs arranged at right angles to the central axis, is found in the neighbouring tumulus of Dowth, at Loughcrew, and in combination with a solar emblem, the swastika, on a small altar in the Pyrenees, figured by Bertrand.

### **The Ship Symbol at New Grange**

Another remarkable and, as far as Ireland goes, unusual figure is found sculptured in the west recess at New Grange. It has been interpreted by various critics as a mason's mark, a piece of Phoenician writing, a group of numerals, and finally (and no doubt correctly) by Mr. George Coffey as a rude representation of a ship with men on board and uplifted sail. It is

noticeable that just above it is a small circle, forming, apparently, part of the design. Another example occurs at Dowth.



Solar Ship (with Sail?) from New Grange, Ireland

The significance of this marking, as we shall see, is possibly very great. It has been discovered that on certain stones in the tumulus of Locmariaker, in Brittany,<sup>18</sup> there occur a number of very similar figures, one of them showing the circle in much the same relative position as at New Grange. The axe, an Egyptian hieroglyph for godhead and a well-known magical emblem, is also represented on this stone. Again, in a brochure by Dr. Oscar Montelius on the rock-sculptures of Sweden<sup>19</sup> we find a reproduction (also given in Du Chaillu's "Viking Age") of a rude rock-carving showing a number of ships with men on board, and the circle quartered by a cross—unmistakably a solar emblem—just above one of them. That these ships (which, like the Irish example, are often so summarily represented as to be mere symbols which no one could identify as a ship were the clue not given by other and more elaborate representations) were drawn so frequently in conjunction with the solar disk merely for amusement or for a purely decorative object seems to me most improbable. In the days of the megalithic folk a sepulchral monument, the very focus of religious ideas, would hardly have been covered with idle and meaningless scrawls. "Man," as Sir J. Simpson has well said, "has ever conjoined together things sacred and things sepulchral." Nor do these scrawls, in the majority of instances, show any glimmering of a decorative intention. But if they had a symbolic intention, what is it that they symbolise?





Solar Ship from Loc mariaker, Brittany



Solar Ship from Hallande, Sweden

### **The Ship Symbol in Egypt**

Now this symbol of the ship, with or without the actual portrayal of the solar emblem, is of very ancient and very common occurrence in the sepulchral art of Egypt. It is connected with the worship of Rā, which came in fully 4000 years B.C. Its meaning as an Egyptian symbol is well known. The ship was called the Boat of the Sun. It was the vessel in which the Sun-god performed his journeys; in particular, the journey which he made nightly to the shores of the Other-world, bearing with him in his bark the souls of the beatified dead. The Sun-god, Rā, is sometimes represented by a disk, sometimes by other emblems, hovering above the vessel or contained within it. Any one who will look over the painted or sculptured sarcophagi in the British Museum will find a host of examples. Sometimes he will find representations of the life-giving rays of Rā pouring down upon the boat and its occupants. Now, in one of the Swedish rock-carvings of ships at Backa, Bohuslän, given by Montelius, a ship crowded with figures is shown beneath a disk with three descending rays, and again another ship with a two-rayed sun above it. It may be added that in the tumulus of Dowth,

which is close to that of New Grange and is entirely of the same character and period, rayed figures and quartered circles, obviously solar emblems, occur abundantly, as also at Loughcrew and other places in Ireland, and one other ship figure has been identified at Dowth



Egyptian Solar Bark, XXII Dynasty



Egyptian Solar Bark, with god Khnemu and attendant deities

In Egypt the solar boat is sometimes represented as containing the solar emblem alone, sometimes it contains the figure of a god with attendant deities, sometimes it contains a crowd of passengers representing human souls, and sometimes the figure of a single corpse on a bier. The megalithic carvings also sometimes show the solar emblem and sometimes not; the boats are sometimes filled with figures and are sometimes empty. When a symbol has once been accepted and understood, any conventional or summary representation of it is sufficient. I take it that the complete form of the megalithic symbol is that of a boat with figures in it and with the solar emblem overhead. These figures, assuming the foregoing interpretation of the design to be correct, must clearly be taken for representations of the dead on their way to the Other-world. They cannot be deities, for representations of the divine powers under human aspect were quite

unknown to the Megalithic People, even after the coming of the Celts—they first occur in Gaul under Roman influence. But if these figures represent the dead, then we have clearly before us the origin of the so-called “Celtic” doctrine of immortality. The carvings in question are pre-Celtic. They are found where no Celts ever penetrated. Yet they point to the existence of just that Other-world doctrine which, from the time of Cæsar downwards, has been associated with Celtic Druidism, and this doctrine was distinctively Egyptian.



Egyptian Bark, with figure of Rā holding an *Ankh*, enclosed in Solar Disk.  
XIX Dynasty

### The “Navetas”

In connexion with this subject I may draw attention to the theory of Mr. W.C. Borlase that the typical design of an Irish dolmen was intended to represent a ship. In Minorca there are analogous structures, there popularly called *navetas* (ships), so distinct is the resemblance. But, he adds, “long before the caves and *navetas* of Minorca were known to me I had formed the opinion that what I have so frequently spoken of as the ‘wedge-shape’ observable so universally in the ground-plans of dolmens was due to an original conception of a ship. From sepulchral tumuli in Scandinavia we know actual vessels have on several occasions been disinterred. In cemeteries of the Iron Age, in the same country, as well as on the more southern Baltic coasts, the ship was a recognised form of sepulchral enclosure.”<sup>20</sup> If Mr. Borlase's view is correct, we have here a very strong

corroboration of the symbolic intention which I attribute to the solar ship-carvings of the Megalithic People.

### **The Ship Symbol in Babylonia**

The ship symbol, it may be remarked, can be traced to about 4000 B.C. in Babylonia, where every deity had his own special ship (that of the god Sin was called the Ship of Light), his image being carried in procession on a litter formed like a ship. This is thought by Jastrow<sup>21</sup> to have originated at a time when the sacred cities of Babylonia were situated on the Persian Gulf, and when religious processions were often carried out by water.

### **The Symbol of the Feet**

Yet there is reason to think that some of these symbols were earlier than any known mythology, and were, so to say, mythologised differently by different peoples, who got hold of them from this now unknown source. A remarkable instance is that of the symbol of the Two Feet. In Egypt the Feet of Osiris formed one of the portions into which his body was cut up, in the well-known myth. They were a symbol of possession or of visitation. "I have come upon earth," says the "Book of the Dead" (ch. xvii.), "and with my two feet have taken possession, I am Tmu." Now this symbol of the feet or footprint is very widespread. It is found in India, as the print of the foot of Buddha,<sup>22</sup> it is found sculptured on dolmens in Brittany,<sup>23</sup> and it occurs in rock-carvings in Scandinavia.<sup>24</sup> In Ireland it passes for the footprints of St. Patrick or St. Columba. Strangest of all, it is found unmistakably in Mexico.<sup>25</sup> Tyler, in his "Primitive Culture" (ii. p. 197) refers to "the Aztec ceremony at the Second Festival of the Sun God, Tezcatlipoca, when they sprinkled maize flour before his sanctuary, and his high priest watched till he beheld the divine footprints, and then shouted to announce, 'Our Great God is come.'"



The Two Feet Symbol

### **The *Ankh* on Megalithic Carvings**

There is very strong evidence of the connexion of the Megalithic People with North Africa. Thus, as Sergi points out, many signs (probably numerical) found on ivory tablets in the cemetery at Naqada discovered by Flinders Petrie are to be met with on European dolmens. Several later Egyptian hieroglyphic signs, including the famous *Ankh*, or *crux ansata*, the symbol of vitality or resurrection, are also found in megalithic carvings.<sup>26</sup> From these correspondences Letourneau drew the conclusion “that the builders of our megalithic monuments came from the South, and were related to the people of North Africa.”<sup>27</sup>



The *Ankh*

### **Evidence from Language**

Approaching the subject from the linguistic side, Rhys and Brynmor Jones find that the African origin—at least proximately—of the primitive population of Great Britain and Ireland is strongly suggested. It is here shown that the Celtic languages preserve in their syntax the Hamitic, and especially the Egyptian type.<sup>28</sup>

## **Egyptian and “Celtic” Ideas of Immortality**

The facts at present known do not, I think, justify us in framing any theory as to the actual historical relation of the dolmen-builders of Western Europe with the people who created the wonderful religion and civilisation of ancient Egypt. But when we consider all the lines of evidence that converge in this direction it seems clear that there was such a relation. Egypt was the classic land of religious symbolism. It gave to Europe the most beautiful and most popular of all its religious symbols, that of the divine mother and child<sup>29</sup>. I believe that it also gave to the primitive inhabitants of Western Europe the profound symbol of the voyaging spirits guided to the world of the dead by the God of Light.

The religion of Egypt, above that of any people whose ideas we know to have been developed in times so ancient, centred on the doctrine of a future life. The palatial and stupendous tombs, the elaborate ritual, the imposing mythology, the immense exaltation of the priestly caste, all these features of Egyptian culture were intimately connected with their doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

To the Egyptian the disembodied soul was no shadowy simulacrum, as the classical nations believed—the future life was a mere prolongation of the present; the just man, when he had won his place in it, found himself among his relatives, his friends, his workpeople, with tasks and enjoyments very much like those of earth. The doom of the wicked was annihilation; he fell a victim to the invisible monster called the Eater of the Dead.

Now when the classical nations first began to take an interest in the ideas of the Celts the thing that principally struck them was the Celtic belief in immortality, which the Gauls said was “handed down by the Druids.” The classical nations believed in immortality; but what a picture does Homer, the Bible of the Greeks, give of the lost, degraded, dehumanised creatures which represented the departed souls of men! Take, as one example, the description of the spirits of the suitors slain by Odysseus as Hermes conducts them to the Underworld:

“Now were summoned the souls of the dead by Cyllenian Hermes....  
Touched by the wand they awoke, and obeyed him and followed  
him, squealing,  
Even as bats in the dark, mysterious depths of a cavern  
Squeal as they flutter around, should one from the cluster be fallen  
Where from the rock suspended they hung, all clinging together;  
So did the souls flock squealing behind him, as Hermes the Helper  
Guided them down to the gloom through dank and mouldering  
pathways.”<sup>30</sup>

The classical writers felt rightly that the Celtic idea of immortality was something altogether different from this. It was both loftier and more realistic; it implied a true persistence of the living man, as he was at present, in all his human relations. They noted with surprise that the Celt would lend money on a promissory note for repayment in the next world.<sup>31</sup> That is an absolutely Egyptian conception. And this very analogy occurred to Diodorus in writing of the Celtic idea of immortality—it was like nothing that he knew of out of Egypt.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Doctrine of Transmigration**

Many ancient writers assert that the Celtic idea of immortality embodied the Oriental conception of the transmigration of souls, and to account for this the hypothesis was invented that they had learned the doctrine from Pythagoras, who represented it in classical antiquity. Thus Cæsar: “The principal point of their (the Druids') teaching is that the soul does not perish, and that after death it passes from one body into another.” And Diodorus: “Among them the doctrine of Pythagoras prevails, according to which the souls of men are immortal, and after a fixed term recommence to live, taking upon themselves a new body.” Now traces of this doctrine certainly do appear in Irish legend. Thus the Irish chieftain, Mongan, who is an historical personage, and whose death is recorded about A.D. 625, is said to have made a wager as to the place of death of a king named Fothad, slain in a battle with the mythical hero Finn mac Cumhal in the third century. He

proves his case by summoning to his aid a *revenant* from the Other-world, Keelta, who was the actual slayer of Fothad, and who describes correctly where the tomb is to be found and what were its contents. He begins his tale by saying to Mongan, "We were with thee," and then, turning to the assembly, he continues: "We were with Finn, coming from Alba...." "Hush," says Mongan, "it is wrong of thee to reveal a secret." The secret is, of course, that Mongan was a reincarnation of Finn.<sup>33</sup> But the evidence on the whole shows that the Celts did not hold this doctrine at all in the same way as Pythagoras and the Orientals did. Transmigration was not, with them, part of the order of things. It *might* happen, but in general it did not; the new body assumed by the dead clothed them in another, not in this world, and so far as we can learn from any ancient authority, there does not appear to have been any idea of moral retribution connected with this form of the future life. It was not so much an article of faith as an idea which haunted the imagination, and which, as Mongan's caution indicates, ought not to be brought into clear light.

However it may have been conceived, it is certain that the belief in immortality was the basis of Celtic Druidism.<sup>34</sup> Caesar affirms this distinctly, and declares the doctrine to have been fostered by the Druids rather for the promotion of courage than for purely religious reasons. An intense Other-world faith, such as that held by the Celts, is certainly one of the mightiest of agencies in the hands of a priesthood who hold the keys of that world. Now Druidism existed in the British Islands, in Gaul, and, in fact, so far as we know, wherever there was a Celtic trace amid a population of dolmen-builders. There were Celts in Cisalpine Gaul, but there were no dolmens there, and there were no Druids.<sup>35</sup> What is quite clear is that when the Celts got to Western Europe they found there a people with a powerful priesthood, a ritual, and imposing religious monuments; a people steeped in magic and mysticism and the cult of the Underworld. The inferences, as I read the facts, seem to be that Druidism in its essential features was imposed upon the imaginative and sensitive nature of the Celt—the Celt with his "extraordinary aptitude" for picking up ideas—by the earlier population of Western Europe, the Megalithic People, while, as held by



these, it stands in some historical relation, which I am not able to pursue in further detail, with the religious culture of ancient Egypt. Much obscurity still broods over the question, and perhaps will always do so, but if these suggestions have anything in them, then the Megalithic People have been brought a step or two out of the atmosphere of uncanny mystery which has surrounded them, and they are shown to have played a very important part in the religious development of Western Europe, and in preparing that part of the world for the rapid extension of the special type of Christianity which took place in it. Bertrand, in his most interesting chapter on “L'Irlande Celtique,”<sup>36</sup> points out that very soon after the conversion of Ireland to Christianity, we find the country covered with monasteries, whose complete organisation seems to indicate that they were really Druidic colleges transformed *en masse*. Cæsar has told us what these colleges were like in Gaul. They were very numerous. In spite of the severe study and discipline involved, crowds flocked into them for the sake of the power wielded by the Druidic order, and the civil immunities which its members of all grades enjoyed. Arts and sciences were studied there, and thousands of verses enshrining the teachings of Druidism were committed to memory. All this is very like what we know of Irish Druidism. Such an organisation would pass into Christianity of the type established in Ireland with very little difficulty. The belief in magical rites would survive—early Irish Christianity, as its copious hagiography plainly shows, was as steeped in magical ideas as ever was Druidic paganism. The belief in immortality would remain, as before, the cardinal doctrine of religion. Above all the supremacy of the sacerdotal order over the temporal power would remain unimpaired; it would still be true, as Dion Chrysostom said of the Druids, that “it is they who command, and kings on thrones of gold, dwelling in splendid palaces, are but their ministers, and the servants of their thought.”<sup>37</sup>

### **Cæsar on the Druidic Culture**

The religious, philosophic, and scientific culture superintended by the Druids is spoken of by Cæsar with much respect. “They discuss and impart

to the youth,” he writes, “many things respecting the stars and their motions, respecting the extent of the universe and of our earth, respecting the nature of things, respecting the power and the majesty of the immortal gods” (bk. vi. 14). We would give much to know some particulars of the teaching here described. But the Druids, though well acquainted with letters, strictly forbade the committal of their doctrines to writing; an extremely sagacious provision, for not only did they thus surround their teaching with that atmosphere of mystery which exercises so potent a spell over the human mind, but they ensured that it could never be effectively controverted.

### **Human Sacrifices in Gaul**

In strange discord, however, with the lofty words of Cæsar stands the abominable practice of human sacrifice whose prevalence he noted among the Celts. Prisoners and criminals, or if these failed even innocent victims, probably children, were encased, numbers at a time, in huge frames of wickerwork, and there burned alive to win the favour of the gods. The practice of human sacrifice is, of course, not specially Druidic—it is found in all parts both of the Old and of the New World at a certain stage of culture, and was doubtless a survival from the time of the Megalithic People. The fact that it should have continued in Celtic lands after an otherwise fairly high state of civilisation and religious culture had been attained can be paralleled from Mexico and Carthage, and in both cases is due, no doubt, to the uncontrolled dominance of a priestly caste.

### **Human Sacrifices in Ireland**

Bertrand endeavours to dissociate the Druids from these practices, of which he says strangely there is “no trace” in Ireland, although there, as elsewhere in Celtica, Druidism was all-powerful. There is little doubt, however, that in Ireland also human sacrifices at one time prevailed. In a very ancient tract, the “*Dinnsenchus*,” preserved in the “*Book of Leinster*,” it is stated that on

Moyslaught, “the Plain of Adoration,” there stood a great gold idol, Crom Cruach (the Bloody Crescent). To it the Gaels used to sacrifice children when praying for fair weather and fertility—“it was milk and corn they asked from it in exchange for their children—how great was their horror and their moaning!”<sup>38</sup>

## **And in Egypt**

In Egypt, where the national character was markedly easy-going, pleasure-loving, and little capable of fanatical exaltation, we find no record of any such cruel rites in the monumental inscriptions and paintings, copious as is the information which they give us on all features of the national life and religion.<sup>39</sup> Manetho, indeed, the Egyptian historian who wrote in the third century B.C., tells us that human sacrifices were abolished by Amasis I. so late as the beginning of the XVIII Dynasty—about 1600 B.C. But the complete silence of the other records shows us that even if we are to believe Manetho, the practice must in historic times have been very rare, and must have been looked on with repugnance.

## **The Names of Celtic Deities**

What were the names and the attributes of the Celtic deities? Here we are very much in the dark. The Megalithic People did not imagine their deities under concrete personal form. Stones, rivers, wells, trees, and other natural objects were to them the adequate symbols, or were half symbols, half actual embodiments, of the supernatural forces which they venerated. But the imaginative mind of the Aryan Celt was not content with this. The existence of personal gods with distinct titles and attributes is reported to us by Caesar, who equates them with various figures in the Roman pantheon—Mercury, Apollo, Mars, and so forth. Lucan mentions a triad of deities, Æsus, Teutates, and Taranus<sup>40</sup>; and it is noteworthy that in these names we seem to be in presence of a true Celtic, *i.e.*, Aryan, tradition. Thus Æsus is derived by Belloguet from the Aryan root *as*, meaning “to be”, which

furnished the name of Asura-masda (*l'Esprit Sage*) to the Persians, Æsun to the Umbrians, Asa (Divine Being) to the Scandinavians. Teutates comes from a Celtic root meaning “valiant”, “warlike”, and indicates a deity equivalent to Mars. Taranus (? Thor), according to de Jubainville, is a god of the Lightning (*taran* in Welsh, Cornish, and Breton is the word for “thunderbolt”). Votive inscriptions to these gods have been found in Gaul and Britain. Other inscriptions and sculptures bear testimony to the existence in Gaul of a host of minor and local deities who are mostly mere names, or not even names, to us now. In the form in which we have them these conceptions bear clear traces of Roman influence. The sculptures are rude copies of the Roman style of religious art. But we meet among them figures of much wilder and stranger aspect—gods with triple faces, gods with branching antlers on their brows, ram-headed serpents, and other now unintelligible symbols of the older faith. Very notable is the frequent occurrence of the cross-legged “Buddha” attitude so prevalent in the religious art of the East and of Mexico, and also the tendency, so well known in Egypt, to group the gods in triads.

### **Caesar on the Celtic Deities**

Caesar, who tries to fit the Gallic religion into the framework of Roman mythology—which was exactly what the Gauls themselves did after the conquest—says they held Mercury to be the chief of the gods, and looked upon him as the inventor of all the arts, as the presiding deity of commerce, and as the guardian of roads and guide of travellers. One may conjecture that he was particularly, to the Gauls as to the Romans, the guide of the dead, of travellers to the Other-world. Many bronze statues to Mercury, of Gaulish origin, still remain, the name being adopted by the Gauls, as many place-names still testify<sup>41</sup>. Apollo was regarded as the deity of medicine and healing, Minerva was the initiator of arts and crafts, Jupiter governed the sky, and Mars presided over war. Cæsar is here, no doubt, classifying under five types and by Roman names a large number of Gallic divinities.

## **The God of the Underworld**

According to Cæsar, a most notable deity of the Gauls was (in Roman nomenclature) Dis, or Pluto, the god of the Underworld inhabited by the dead. From him all the Gauls claimed to be descended, and on this account, says Cæsar, they began their reckoning of the twenty-four hours of the day with the oncoming of night.<sup>42</sup> The name of this deity is not given. D'Arbois de Jubainville considers that, together with Æsus, Teutates, Taranus, and, in Irish mythology, Balor and the Fomorians, he represents the powers of darkness, death, and evil, and Celtic mythology is thus interpreted as a variant of the universal solar myth, embodying the conception of the eternal conflict between Day and Night.

## **The God of Light**

The God of Light appears in Gaul and in Ireland as Lugh, or Lugus, who has left his traces in many place-names such as *Lug-dunum* (Leyden), Lyons, &c. Lugh appears in Irish legend with distinctly solar attributes. When he meets his army before the great conflict with the Fomorians, they feel, says the saga, as if they beheld the rising of the sun. Yet he is also, as we shall see, a god of the Underworld, belonging on the side of his mother Ethlinn, daughter of Balor, to the Powers of Darkness.

## **The Celtic Conception of Death**

The fact is that the Celtic conception of the realm of death differed altogether from that of the Greeks and Romans, and, as I have already pointed out, resembled that of Egyptian religion. The Other-world was not a place of gloom and suffering, but of light and liberation. The Sun was as much the god of that world as he was of this. Evil, pain, and gloom there were, no doubt, and no doubt these principles were embodied by the Irish Celts in their myths of Balor and the Fomorians, of which we shall hear anon; but that they were particularly associated with the idea of death is, I think, a false supposition founded on misleading analogies drawn from the

ideas of the classical nations. Here the Celts followed North African or Asiatic conceptions rather than those of the Aryans of Europe. It is only by realising that the Celts as we know them in history, from the break-up of the Mid-European Celtic empire onwards, formed a singular blend of Aryan with non-Aryan characteristics, that we shall arrive at a true understanding of their contribution to European history and their influence in European culture.

### **The Five Factors in Ancient Celtic Culture**

To sum up the conclusions indicated: we can, I think, distinguish five distinct factors in the religious and intellectual culture of Celtic lands as we find them prior to the influx of classical or of Christian influences. First, we have before us a mass of popular superstitions and of magical observances, including human sacrifice. These varied more or less from place to place, centring as they did largely on local features which were regarded as embodiments or vehicles of divine or of diabolic power. Secondly, there was certainly in existence a thoughtful and philosophic creed, having as its central object of worship the Sun, as an emblem of divine power and constancy, and as its central doctrine the immortality of the soul. Thirdly, there was a worship of personified deities, Æsus, Teutates, Lugh, and others, conceived as representing natural forces, or as guardians of social laws. Fourthly, the Romans were deeply impressed with the existence among the Druids of a body of teaching of a quasi-scientific nature about natural phenomena and the constitution of the universe, of the details of which we unfortunately know practically nothing. Lastly, we have to note the prevalence of a sacerdotal organisation, which administered the whole system of religious and of secular learning and literature,<sup>43</sup> which carefully confined this learning to a privileged caste, and which, by virtue of its intellectual supremacy and of the atmosphere of religious awe with which it was surrounded, became the sovran power, social, political, and religious, in every Celtic country. I have spoken of these elements as distinct, and we can, indeed, distinguish them in thought, but in practice they were

inextricably intertwined, and the Druidic organisation pervaded and ordered all. Can we now, it may be asked, distinguish among them what is of Celtic and what of pre-Celtic and probably non-Aryan origin? This is a more difficult task; yet, looking at all the analogies and probabilities, I think we shall not be far wrong in assigning to the Megalithic People the special doctrines, the ritual, and the sacerdotal organisation of Druidism, and to the Celtic element the personified deities, with the zest for learning and for speculation; while the popular superstitions were merely the local form assumed by conceptions.

### **The Celts of To-day**

In view of the undeniably mixed character of the populations called “Celtic” at the present day, it is often urged that this designation has no real relation to any ethnological fact. The Celts who fought with Caesar in Gaul and with the English in Ireland are, it is said, no more—they have perished on a thousand battlefields from Alesia to the Boyne, and an older racial stratum has come to the surface in their place. The true Celts, according to this view, are only to be found in the tall, ruddy Highlanders of Perthshire and North-west Scotland, and in a few families still surviving in Ireland and in Wales. In all this I think it must be admitted that there is a large measure of truth. Yet it must not be forgotten that the descendants of the Megalithic People at the present day are, on the physical side, deeply impregnated with Celtic blood, and on the spiritual with Celtic traditions and ideals. Nor, again, in discussing these questions of ethnic-character and its origin, must it ever be assumed that the character of a people can be analysed as one analyses a chemical compound, fixing once for all its constituent parts and determining its future behaviour and destiny. Race-character, potent and enduring though it be, is not a dead thing, cast in an iron mould, and thereafter incapable of change and growth. It is part of the living forces of the world; it is plastic and vital; it has hidden potencies which a variety of causes, such as a felicitous cross with a different, but not too different,

stock, or—in another sphere—the adoption of a new religious or social ideal, may at any time unlock and bring into action.

Of one thing I personally feel convinced—that the problem of the ethical, social, and intellectual development of the people constituting what is called the “Celtic Fringe” in Europe ought to be worked for on Celtic lines; by the maintenance of the Celtic tradition, Celtic literature, Celtic speech—the encouragement, in short, of all those Celtic affinities of which this mixed ethnicity is now the sole conscious inheritor and guardian. To these it will respond, by these it can be deeply moved; nor has the harvest ever failed those who with courage and faith have driven their plough into this rich field. On the other hand, if this work is to be done with success it must be done in no pedantic, narrow, intolerant spirit; there must be no clinging to the outward forms of the past simply because the Celtic spirit once found utterance in them. Let it be remembered that in the early Middle Ages Celts from Ireland were the most notable explorers, the most notable pioneers of religion, science, and speculative thought in Europe.<sup>44</sup> Modern investigators have traced their footprints of light over half the heathen continent, and the schools of Ireland were thronged with foreign pupils who could get learning nowhere else. The Celtic spirit was then playing its true part in the world-drama, and a greater it has never played. The legacy of these men should be cherished indeed, but not as a museum curiosity; nothing could be more opposed to their free, bold, adventurous spirit than to let that legacy petrify in the hands of those who claim the heirship or their name and fame.

## **The Mythical Literature**

After the sketch contained in this and the foregoing chapter of the early history of the Celts, and of the forces which have moulded it, we shall now turn to give an account of the mythical and legendary literature in which their spirit most truly lives and shines. We shall not here concern ourselves with any literature which is not Celtic. With all that other peoples have made—as in the Arthurian legends—of myths and tales originally Celtic,



we have here nothing to do. No one can now tell how much is Celtic in them and how much is not. And in matters of this kind it is generally the final recasting that is of real importance and value. Whatever we give, then, we give without addition or reshaping. Stories, of course, have often to be summarised, but there shall be nothing in them that did not come direct from the Celtic mind, and that does not exist to-day in some variety, Gaelic or Cymric, of the Celtic tongue.

- [1.](#) From Greek *megas*, great, and *lithos*, a stone.
- [2.](#) See p. 78.
- [3.](#) See Borlase's "Dolmens of Ireland," pp. 605, 606, for a discussion of this question.
- [4.](#) Professor Ridgeway (see Report of the Brit. Assoc. for 1908) has contended that the Megalithic People spoke an Aryan language; otherwise he thinks more traces of its influence must have survived in the Celtic which supplanted it. The weight of authority, as well as such direct evidence as we possess, seems to be against his view.
- [5.](#) See Holder, "Altceltischer Sprachschatz." *sulb voce* "Hyperboreoi."
- [6.](#) Thus the Greek *pharmakon*=medicine, poison, or charm; and I am informed that the Central African word for magic or charm is *mankwala*, which also means medicine.
- [7.](#) If Pliny meant that it was here first codified and organised he may be right, but the conceptions on which magic rest are practically universal, and of immemorial antiquity.
- [8.](#) Adopted 451 B.C. Livy entitles them "the fountain of all public and private right." They stood in the Forum till the third century A.D., but have now perished, except for fragments preserved in various commentaries.
- [9.](#) See "Revue Archeologique," t. xii., 1865, "Fouilles de René Galles."
- [10.](#) Jade is not found in the native state in Europe, nor nearer than China.
- [11.](#) Small stones, crystals, and gems were, however, also venerated. The celebrated Black Stone of Pergamos was the subject of an embassy from Rome to that city in the time of the Second Punic War, the Sibylline Books having predicted victory to its possessors. It was brought to Rome with great rejoicings in the year 205. It is stated to have been about the size of a man's fist, and was probably a meteorite. Compare the myth in Hesiod which relates how Kronos devoured a stone in the belief that it was his offspring, Zeus. It was then possible to mistake a stone for a god.
- [12.](#) Replaced by a photograph in this edition.
- [13.](#) See Sir J. Simpson's "Archaic Sculpturings" 1867.
- [14.](#) The fact is recorded in the "Annals of the Four Masters" Under the date 861, and in the "Annals of Ulster" under 862.
- [15.](#) See "Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy," vol. xxx. pt. i., 1892, and "New Grange," by G. Coffey, 1912.

- [16.](#) It must be observed, however, that the decoration was, certainly, in some, and perhaps in all cases, carried out before the stones were placed in position. This is also the case at Gavr'inis.
- [17.](#) He has modified this view in his latest work, "New Grange," 1912.
- [18.](#) "Proc. Royal Irish Acad.," vol. viii. 1863, p. 400, and G. Coffey, *op. cit.* p. 30.
- [19.](#) "Les Sculptures de Rochers de la Suède," read at the Prehistoric Congress, Stockholm, 1874; and see G. Coffey, *op. cit.* p. 60.
- [20.](#) "Dolmens of Ireland," pp. 701-704.
- [21.](#) "The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria."
- [22.](#) A good example from Amaravati (after Fergusson) is given by Bertrand, "Rel. des G.," p. 389.
- [23.](#) Sergi, "The Mediterranean Race," p. 313.
- [24.](#) At Lökeberget, Bohuslän; see Monteiis, *op. cit.*
- [25.](#) See Lord Kingsborough's "Antiquities of Mexico," *passim*, and the Humboldt fragment of Mexican painting (reproduced in Churchward's "Signs and Symbols of Primordial Man").
- [26.](#) See Sergi, *op. cit.* p. 290, for the *Ankh* on a French dolmen.
- [27.](#) "Bulletin de la Soc. d'Anthropologie," Paris, April 1893.
- [28.](#) "The Welsh People," pp. 616-664, where the subject is fully discussed in an appendix by Professor J. Morris Jones. "The pre-Aryan idioms which still live in Welsh and Irish were derived from a language allied to Egyptian and the Berber tongues."
- [29.](#) Flinders Petrie, "Egypt and Israel," pp. 137, 899.
- [30.](#) I quote from Mr. H.B. Cotterill's beautiful hexameter version.
- [31.](#) Valerius Maximus (about A.D 30) and other classical writers mention this practice.
- [32.](#) Book V.
- [33.](#) De Jubainville, "Irish Mythological Cycle," p.191 *sqq.*
- [34.](#) The etymology of the word "Druid" is no longer an unsolved problem. It had been suggested that the latter part of the word might be connected with the Aryan root VID, which appears in "wisdom," in the Latin *videre*, &c., Thurneysen has now shown that this root in combination with the intensive particle *dru* would yield the word *dru-vids*, represented in Gaelic by *draoi*, a Druid, just as another intensive, *su*, with *vids* yields the Gaelic *saoi*, a sage.
- [35.](#) See Rice Holmes, "Cæsar's Conquest," p. 15, and pp. 532-536. Rhys, it may be observed, believes that Druidism was the religion of the aboriginal inhabitants of Western Europe "from the Baltic to Gibraltar" ("Celtic Britain," p. 73). But we only *know* of it where Celts and dolmen-builders combined. Cæsar remarks of the Germans that they had no Druids and cared little about sacrificial ceremonies.
- [36.](#) "Rel. des Gaulois," leçon xx.
- [37.](#) Quoted by Bertrand, *op. cit.* p. 279.

- [38.](#) “The Irish Mythological Cycle,” by d’Arbois de Jubainville, p. 61. The “Dinnsenchus” in question is an early Christian document. No trace of a being like Crom Cruach has been found as yet in the pagan literature of Ireland, nor in the writings of St. Patrick, and I think it is quite probable that even in the time of St. Patrick human sacrifices had become only a memory.
- [39.](#) A representation of human sacrifice has, however, lately been discovered in a Temple of the Sun in the ancient Ethiopian capital, Meroë.
- [40.](#) “You (Celts) who by cruel blood outpoured think to appease the pitiless Teutates, the horrid Æsus with his barbarous altars, and Taranus whose worship is no gentler than that of the Scythian Diana”, to whom captive were offered up. (Lucan, “Pharsalia”, i. 444.) An altar dedicated to Æsus has been discovered in Paris.
- [41.](#) Mont Mercure, Mercœur, Mercoirey, Montmartre (*Mons Mercurii*), &c.
- [42.](#) To this day in many parts of France the peasantry use terms like *annuit, o’né, anneue*, &c., all meaning “to-night,” for *aujourd’hui* (Bertrand, “Rel. des G.,” p. 356).
- [43.](#) The *fili*, or professional poets, it must be remembered, were a branch of the Druidic order.
- [44.](#) For instance, Pelagius in the fifth century; Columba, Columbanus, and St. Gall in the sixth; Fridolin, named *Viator*, “the Traveller,” and Fursa in the seventh; Virgilius (Feargal) of Salzburg, who had to answer at Rome for teaching the sphericity of the earth, in the eighth; Dicuil, “the Geographer,” and Johannes Scotus Erigena—the master mind of his epoch—in the ninth.

# The Gods of Gaul and the Continental Celts

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The passage in which Cæsar sums up the Gaulish pantheon runs: "They worship chiefly the god Mercury; of him there are many symbols, and they regard him as the inventor of all the arts, as the guide of travellers, and as possessing great influence over bargains and commerce. After him they worship Apollo and Mars, Juppiter and Minerva. About these they hold much the same beliefs as other nations. Apollo heals diseases, Minerva teaches the elements of industry and the arts, Juppiter rules over the heavens, Mars directs war.... All the Gauls assert that they are descended from Dispater, their progenitor."<sup>1</sup>

As will be seen in this chapter, the Gauls had many other gods than these, while the Roman gods, by whose names Cæsar calls the Celtic divinities, probably only approximately corresponded to them in functions. As the Greeks called by the names of their own gods those of Egypt, Persia, and Babylonia, so the Romans identified Greek, Teutonic, and Celtic gods with theirs. The identification was seldom complete, and often extended only to one particular function or attribute. But, as in Gaul, it was often part of a state policy, and there the fusion of cults was intended to break the power of the Druids. The Gauls seem to have adopted Roman civilisation easily, and to have acquiesced in the process of assimilation of their divinities to those of their conquerors. Hence we have thousands of inscriptions in which a god is called by the name of the Roman deity to whom he was assimilated and by his own Celtic name—Jupiter Taranis, Apollo Grannus, etc. Or sometimes to the name of the Roman god is added a descriptive Celtic epithet or a word derived from a Celtic place-name. Again, since Augustus reinstated the cult of the Lares, with himself as chief Lar, the epithet Augustus was given to all gods to whom the character of the Lares could be ascribed, *e.g.* Belenos Augustus. Cults of local gods became cults of the genius of the place, coupled with the genius of the emperor. In some cases, however, the native name stands alone. The process was aided

by art. Celtic gods are represented after Greco-Roman or Greco-Egyptian models. Sometimes these carry a native divine symbol, or, in a few cases, the type is purely native, *e.g.* that of Cernunnos. Thus the native paganism was largely transformed before Christianity appeared in Gaul. Many Roman gods were worshipped as such, not only by the Romans in Gaul, but by the Gauls, and we find there also traces of the Oriental cults affected by the Romans.<sup>2</sup>

There were probably in Gaul many local gods, tribal or otherwise, of roads and commerce, of the arts, of healing, etc., who, bearing different names, might easily be identified with each other or with Roman gods. Cæsar's Mercury, Mars, Minerva, etc., probably include many local Minervas, Mars, and Mercuries. There may, however, have been a few great gods common to all Gaul, universally worshipped, besides the numerous local gods, some of whom may have been adopted from the aborigines. An examination of the divine names in Holder's *Altceltischer Sprachschatz* will show how numerous the local gods of the continental Celts must have been. Professor Anwyl reckons that 270 gods are mentioned once on inscriptions, 24 twice, 11 thrice, 10 four times, 3 five times, 2 seven times, 4 fifteen times, 1 nineteen times (Grannos), and 1 thirty-nine times (Belenos).<sup>3</sup>

The god or gods identified with Mercury were very popular in Gaul, as Cæsar's words and the witness of place-names derived from the Roman name of the god show. These had probably supplanted earlier names derived from those of the corresponding native gods. Many temples of the god existed, especially in the region of the Allobrogi, and bronze statuettes of him have been found in abundance. Pliny also describes a colossal statue designed for the Arverni who had a great temple of the god on the Puy de Dôme.<sup>4</sup> Mercury was not necessarily the chief god, and at times, *e.g.* in war, the native war-gods would be prominent. The native names of the gods assimilated to Mercury are many in number; in some cases they are epithets, derived from the names of places where a local "Mercury" was worshipped, in others they are derived from some function of the gods.<sup>5</sup> One of these titles is Artaios, perhaps cognate with Irish *art*, "god," or connected with *artos*, "bear." Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup>, however, finds its cognate in

Welsh *âr*, "ploughed land," as if one of the god's functions connected him with agriculture.<sup>6</sup> This is supported by another inscription to Mercurius Cultor at Wurtemberg. Local gods of agriculture must thus have been assimilated to Mercury. A god Moccus, "swine," was also identified with Mercury, and the swine was a frequent representative of the corn-spirit or of vegetation divinities in Europe. The flesh of the animal was often mixed with the seed corn or buried in the fields to promote fertility. The swine had been a sacred animal among the Celts, but had apparently become an anthropomorphic god of fertility, Moccus, assimilated to Mercury, perhaps because the Greek Hermes caused fertility in flocks and herds. Such a god was one of a class whose importance was great among the Celts as an agricultural people.

Commerce, much developed among the settled Gauls, gave rise to a god or gods who guarded roads over which merchants travelled, and boundaries where their transactions took place. Hence we have an inscription from Yorkshire, "To the god who invented roads and paths," while another local god of roads, equated with Mercury, was Cimiacinus.<sup>7</sup>

Another god, Ogmíós, a native god of speech, who draws men by chains fastened to the tip of his tongue, is identified in Lucian with Heracles, and is identical with the Goidelic Ogma.<sup>8</sup> Eloquence and speech are important matters among primitive peoples, and this god has more likeness to Mercury as a culture-god than to Heracles, Greek writers speaking of eloquence as binding men with the chains of Hermes.

Several local gods, of agriculture, commerce, and culture, were thus identified with Mercury, and the Celtic Mercury was sometimes worshipped on hilltops, one of the epithets of the god, Dumias, being connected with the Celtic word for hill or mound. Irish gods were also associated with mounds.

Many local gods were identified with Apollo both in his capacity of god of healing and also that of god of light.<sup>9</sup> The two functions are not incompatible, and this is suggested by the name Grannos, god of thermal springs both in Britain and on the Continent. The name is connected with a root which gives words meaning "burning," "shining," etc., and from which

comes also Irish *grian*, "sun." The god is still remembered in a chant sung round bonfires in Auvergne. A sheaf of corn is set on fire, and called "Granno mio," while the people sing, "Granno, my friend; Granno, my father; Granno, my mother."<sup>10</sup> Another god of thermal springs was Borvo, Bormo, or Bormanus, whose name is derived from *borvo*, whence Welsh *berw*, "boiling," and is evidently connected with the bubbling of the springs.<sup>11</sup> Votive tablets inscribed Grannos or Borvo show that the offerers desired healing for themselves or others.

The name Belenos found over a wide area, but mainly in Aquileia, comes from *belo-s*, bright, and probably means "the shining one." It is thus the name of a Celtic sun-god, equated with Apollo in that character. If he is the Belinus referred to by Geoffrey of Monmouth,<sup>12</sup> his cult must have extended into Britain from the Continent, and he is often mentioned by classical writers, while much later Ausonius speaks of his priest in Gaul.<sup>13</sup> Many place and personal names point to the popularity of his cult, and inscriptions show that he, too, was a god of health and of healing-springs. The plant *Belinuntia* was called after him and venerated for its healing powers.<sup>14</sup> The sun-god's functions of light and fertility easily passed over into those of health-giving, as our study of Celtic festivals will show.

A god with the name Maponos, connected with words denoting "youthfulness," is found in England and Gaul, equated with Apollo, who himself is called *Bonus Puer* in a Dacian inscription. Another god Mogons or Mogounos, whose name is derived from *Mago*, "to increase," and suggests the idea of youthful strength, may be a form of the sun-god, though some evidence points to his having been a sky-god.<sup>15</sup>

The Celtic Apollo is referred to by classical writers. Diodorus speaks of his circular temple in an island of the Hyperboreans, adorned with votive offerings. The kings of the city where the temple stood, and its overseers, were called "Boreads," and every nineteenth year the god appeared dancing in the sky at the spring equinox.<sup>16</sup> The identifications of the temple with Stonehenge and of the Boreads with the Bards are quite hypothetical. Apollonius says that the Celts regarded the waters of Eridanus as due to the



tears of Apollo—probably a native myth attributing the creation of springs and rivers to the tears of a god, equated by the Greeks with Apollo.<sup>17</sup> The Celtic sun-god, as has been seen, was a god of healing springs.

Some sixty names or titles of Celtic war-gods are known, generally equated with Mars.<sup>18</sup> These were probably local tribal divinities regarded as leading their worshippers to battle. Some of the names show that these gods were thought of as mighty warriors, *e.g.* Caturix, "battle-king," Belatu-Cadros—a common name in Britain—perhaps meaning "comely in slaughter,"<sup>19</sup> and Albiorix, "world-king."<sup>20</sup> Another name, Rigisamus, from *rix* and *samus*, "like to," gives the idea of "king-like."<sup>21</sup>

Toutatis, Totatis, and Tutatis are found in inscriptions from Seckau, York, and Old Carlisle, and may be identified with Lucan's Teutates, who with Taranis and Esus mentioned by him, is regarded as one of three pan-Celtic gods.<sup>22</sup> Had this been the case we should have expected to find many more inscriptions to them. The scholiast on Lucan identifies Teutates now with Mars, now with Mercury. His name is connected with *teuta*, "tribe," and he is thus a tribal war-god, regarded as the embodiment of the tribe in its warlike capacity.

Neton, a war-god of the Accetani, has a name connected with Irish *nia*, "warrior," and may be equated with the Irish war-god Nét. Another god, Camulos, known from British and continental inscriptions, and figured on British coins with warlike emblems, has perhaps some connection with Cumal, father of Fionn, though it is uncertain whether Cumal was an Irish divinity.<sup>23</sup>

Another god equated with Mars is the Gaulish Braciaca, god of malt. According to classical writers, the Celts were drunken race, and besides importing quantities of wine, they made their own native drinks, *e.g.* (chourmi), the Irish *cuirm*, and *braccat*, both made from malt (*braich*).<sup>24</sup> These words, with the Gaulish *brace*, "spelt,"<sup>25</sup> are connected with the name of this god, who was a divine personification of the substance from which the drink was made which produced, according to primitive ideas,



the divine frenzy of intoxication. It is not clear why Mars should have been equated with this god.

Cæsar says that the Celtic Juppiter governed heaven. A god who carries a wheel, probably a sun-god, and another, a god of thunder, called Taranis, seem to have been equated with Juppiter. The sun-god with the wheel was not equated with Apollo, who seems to have represented Celtic sun-gods only in so far as they were also gods of healing. In some cases the god with the wheel carries also a thunderbolt, and on some altars, dedicated to Juppiter, both a wheel and a thunderbolt are figured. Many races have symbolised the sun as a circle or wheel, and an old Roman god, Summanus, probably a sun-god, later assimilated to Juppiter, had as his emblem a wheel. The Celts had the same symbolism, and used the wheel symbol as an amulet,<sup>26</sup> while at the midsummer festivals blazing wheels, symbolising the sun, were rolled down a slope. Possibly the god carries a thunderbolt because the Celts, like other races, believed that lightning was a spark from the sun.

Three divinities have claims to be the god whom Cæsar calls Dispater—a god with a hammer, a crouching god called Cernunnos, and a god called Esus or Silvanus. Possibly the native Dispater was differently envisaged in different districts, so that these would be local forms of one god.

1. The god Taranis mentioned by Lucan is probably the Taranoos and Taranucnos of inscriptions, sometimes equated with Juppiter.<sup>27</sup> These names are connected with Celtic words for "thunder"; hence Taranis is a thunder-god. The scholiasts on Lucan identify him now with Juppiter, now with Dispater. This latter identification is supported by many who regard the god with the hammer as at once Taranis and Dispater, though it cannot be proved that the god with the hammer is Taranis. On one inscription the hammer-god is called Sucellos; hence we may regard Taranis as a distinct deity, a thunder-god, equated with Juppiter, and possibly represented by the Taran of the Welsh tale of *Kulhwych*.<sup>28</sup>

Primitive men, whose only weapon and tool was a stone axe or hammer, must have regarded it as a symbol of force, then of supernatural force, hence of divinity. It is represented on remains of the Stone Age, and the axe

was a divine symbol to the Mycenæans, a hieroglyph of Neter to the Egyptians, and a worshipful object to Polynesians and Chaldeans. The cult of axe or hammer may have been widespread, and to the Celts, as to many other peoples, it was a divine symbol. Thus it does not necessarily denote a thunderbolt, but rather power and might, and possibly, as the tool which shaped things, creative might. The Celts made *ex voto* hammers of lead, or used axe-heads as amulets, or figured them on altars and coins, and they also placed the hammer in the hand of a god.<sup>29</sup>

The god with the hammer is a gracious bearded figure, clad in Gaulish dress, and he carries also a cup. His plastic type is derived from that of the Alexandrian Serapis, ruler of the underworld, and that of Hades-Pluto.<sup>30</sup> His emblems, especially that of the hammer, are also those of the Pluto of the Etruscans, with whom the Celts had been in contact.<sup>31</sup> He is thus a Celtic Dispatēr, an underworld god, possibly at one time an Earth-god and certainly a god of fertility, and ancestor of the Celtic folk. In some cases, like Serapis, he carries a *modius* on his head, and this, like the cup, is an emblem of chthonian gods, and a symbol of the fertility of the soil. The god being benevolent, his hammer, like the tool with which man forms so many things, could only be a symbol of creative force.<sup>32</sup> As an ancestor of the Celts, the god is naturally represented in Celtic dress. In one bas-relief he is called Sucellos, and has a consort, Nantosvelta.<sup>33</sup> Various meanings have been assigned to "Sucellos," but it probably denotes the god's power of striking with the hammer. M. D'Arbois hence regards him as a god of blight and death, like Balor.<sup>34</sup> But though this Celtic Dispatēr was a god of the dead who lived on in the underworld, he was not necessarily a destructive god. The underworld god was the god from whom or from whose kingdom men came forth, and he was also a god of fertility. To this we shall return.

2. A bearded god, probably squatting, with horns from each of which hangs a torque, is represented on an altar found at Paris.<sup>35</sup> He is called Cernunnos, perhaps "the horned," from *cerna*, "horn," and a whole group of nameless gods, with similar or additional attributes, have affinities with him.

(a) A bronze statuette from Autun represents a similar figure, probably horned, who presents a torque to two ram's-headed serpents. Fixed above his ears are two small heads.<sup>36</sup> On a monument from Vandoeuvres is a squatting horned god, pressing a sack. Two genii stand beside him on a serpent, while one of them holds a torque.<sup>37</sup>

(b) Another squatting horned figure with a torque occurs on an altar from Reims. He presses a bag, from which grain escapes, and on it an ox and stag are feeding. A rat is represented on the pediment above, and on either side stand Apollo and Mercury.<sup>38</sup> On the altar of Saintes is a squatting but headless god with torque and purse. Beside him is a goddess with a cornucopia, and a smaller divinity with a cornucopia and an apple. A similar squatting figure, supported by male and female deities, is represented on the other side of the altar.<sup>39</sup> On the altar of Beaune are three figures, one horned with a cornucopia, another three-headed, holding a basket.<sup>40</sup> Three figures, one female and two male, are found on the Dennevy altar. One god is three-faced, the other has a cornucopia, which he offers to a serpent.<sup>41</sup>

(c) Another image represents a three-faced god, holding a serpent with a ram's head.<sup>42</sup>

(d) Above a seated god and goddess on an altar from Malmaison is a block carved to represent three faces. To be compared with these are seven steles from Reims, each with a triple face but only one pair of eyes. Above some of these is a ram's head. On an eighth stele the heads are separated.<sup>43</sup>

Cernunnos may thus have been regarded as a three-headed, horned, squatting god, with a torque and ram's-headed serpent. But a horned god is sometimes a member of a triad, perhaps representing myths in which Cernunnos was associated with other gods. The three-headed god may be the same as the horned god, though on the Beaune altar they are distinct. The various representations are linked together, but it is not certain that all are varying types of one god. Horns, torque, horned snake, or even the triple head may have been symbols pertaining to more than one god, though generally associated with Cernunnos.

The squatting attitude of the god has been differently explained, and its affinities regarded now as Buddhist, now as Greco-Egyptian.<sup>44</sup> But if the god is a Dispater, and the ancestral god of the Celts, it is natural, as M. Mowat points out, to represent him in the typical attitude of the Gauls when sitting, since they did not use seats.<sup>45</sup> While the horns were probably symbols of power and worn also by chiefs on their helmets,<sup>46</sup> they may also show that the god was an anthropomorphic form of an earlier animal god, like the wolf-skin of other gods. Hence also horned animals would be regarded as symbols of the god, and this may account for their presence on the Reims monument. Animals are sometimes represented beside the divinities who were their anthropomorphic forms.<sup>47</sup> Similarly the ram's-headed serpent points to animal worship. But its presence with three-headed and horned gods is enigmatic, though, as will be seen later, it may have been connected with a cult of the dead, while the serpent was a chthonian animal.<sup>48</sup> These gods were gods of fertility and of the underworld of the dead. While the bag or purse (interchangeable with the cornucopia) was a symbol of Mercury, it was also a symbol of Pluto, and this may point to the fact that the gods who bear it had the same character as Pluto. The significance of the torque is also doubtful, but the Gauls offered torques to the gods, and they may have been regarded as vehicles of the warrior's strength which passed from him to the god to whom the victor presented it.

Though many attempts have been made to prove the non-Celtic origin of the three-headed divinities or of their images,<sup>49</sup> there is no reason why the conception should not be Celtic, based on some myth now lost to us. The Celts had a cult of human heads, and fixed them up on their houses in order to obtain the protection of the ghost. Bodies or heads of dead warriors had a protective influence on their land or tribe, and myth told how the head of the god Bran saved his country from invasion. In other myths human heads speak after being cut off.<sup>50</sup> It might thus easily have been believed that the representation of a god's head had a still more powerful protective influence, especially when it was triplicated, thus looking in all directions, like Janus.

The significance of the triad on these monuments is uncertain but since the supporting divinities are now male, now female, now male and female, it probably represents myths of which the horned or three-headed god was the central figure. Perhaps we shall not be far wrong in regarding such gods, on the whole, as Cernunnos, a god of abundance to judge by his emblems, and by the cornucopia held by his companions, probably divinities of fertility. In certain cases figures of squatting and horned goddesses with cornucopia occur.<sup>51</sup> These may be consorts of Cernunnos, and perhaps preceded him in origin. We may also go further and see in this god of abundance and fertility at once an Earth and an Under-earth god, since earth and under-earth are much the same to primitive thought, and fertility springs from below the earth's surface. Thus Cernunnos would be another form of the Celtic Dispater. Generally speaking, the images of Cernunnos are not found where those of the god with the hammer (Dispater) are most numerous. These two types may thus be different local forms of Dispater. The squatting attitude of Cernunnos is natural in the image of the ancestor of a people who squatted. As to the symbols of plenty, we know that Pluto was confounded with Plutus, the god of riches, because corn and minerals came out of the earth, and were thus the gifts of an Earth or Under-earth god. Celtic myth may have had the same confusion.

On a Paris altar and on certain steles a god attacks a serpent with a club. The serpent is a chthonian animal, and the god, called Smertullos, may be a Dispater.<sup>52</sup> Gods who are anthropomorphic forms of earlier animal divinities, sometimes have the animals as symbols or attendants, or are regarded as hostile to them. In some cases Dispater may have outgrown the serpent symbolism, the serpent being regarded locally as his foe; this assumes that the god with the club is the same as the god with the hammer. But in the case of Cernunnos the animal remained as his symbol.

Dispater was a god of growth and fertility, and besides being lord of the underworld of the dead, not necessarily a dark region or the abode of "dark" gods as is so often assumed by writers on Celtic religion, he was ancestor of the living. This may merely have meant that, as in other mythologies, men came to the surface of the earth from an underground region, like all things

whose roots struck deep down into the earth. The lord of the underworld would then easily be regarded as their ancestor.<sup>53</sup>

3. The hammer and the cup are also the symbols of a god called Silvanus, identified by M. Mowat with Esus,<sup>54</sup> a god represented cutting down a tree with an axe. Axe and hammer, however, are not necessarily identical, and the symbols are those of Dispater, as has been seen. A purely superficial connection between the Roman Silvanus and the Celtic Dispater may have been found by Gallo-Roman artists in the fact that both wear a wolf-skin, while there may once have been a Celtic wolf totem-god of the dead.<sup>55</sup> The Roman god was also associated with the wolf. This might be regarded as one out of many examples of a mere superficial assimilation of Roman and Celtic divinities, but in this case they still kept certain symbols of the native Dispater—the cup and hammer. Of course, since the latter was also a god of fertility, there was here another link with Silvanus, a god of woods and vegetation. The cult of the god was widespread—in Spain, S. Gaul, the Rhine provinces, Cisalpine Gaul, Central Europe and Britain. But one inscription gives the name Selvanos, and it is not impossible that there was a native god Selvanus. If so, his name may have been derived from *selva*, "possession," Irish *sealbh*, "possession," "cattle," and he may have been a chthonian god of riches, which in primitive communities consisted of cattle.<sup>56</sup> Domestic animals, in Celtic mythology, were believed to have come from the god's land. Selvanus would thus be easily identified with Silvanus, a god of flocks.

Thus the Celtic Dispater had various names and forms in different regions, and could be assimilated to different foreign gods. Since Earth and Under-earth are so nearly connected, this divinity may once have been an Earth-god, and as such perhaps took the place of an earlier Earth-mother, who now became his consort or his mother. On a monument from Salzbach, Dispater is accompanied by a goddess called Aeracura, holding a basket of fruit, and on another monument from Ober-Seebach, the companion of Dispater holds a cornucopia. In the latter instance Dispater holds a hammer and cup, and the goddess may be Aeracura. Aeracura is also associated with Dispater in several inscriptions.<sup>57</sup> It is not yet certain that she is a Celtic



goddess, but her presence with this evidently Celtic god is almost sufficient proof of the fact. She may thus represent the old Earth-goddess, whose place the native Dispater gradually usurped.

Lucan mentions a god Esus, who is represented on a Paris altar as a woodman cutting down a tree, the branches of which are carried round to the next side of the altar, on which is represented a bull with three cranes—Tarvos Trigaranos. The same figure, unnamed, occurs on another altar at Trèves, but in this case the bull's head appears in the branches, and on them sit the birds. M. Reinach applies one formula to the subjects of these altars—"The divine Woodman hews the Tree of the Bull with Three Cranes."<sup>58</sup> The whole represents some myth unknown to us, but M. D'Arbois finds in it some allusion to events in the Cúchulainn saga. To this we shall return.<sup>59</sup> Bull and tree are perhaps both divine, and if the animal, like the images of the divine bull, is three-horned, then the three cranes (*garanus*, "crane") may be a rebus for three-horned (*trikeras*), or more probably three-headed (*trikarenos*).<sup>60</sup> In this case woodman, tree, and bull might all be representatives of a god of vegetation. In early ritual, human, animal, or arboreal representatives of the god were periodically destroyed to ensure fertility, but when the god became separated from these representatives, the destruction or slaying was regarded as a sacrifice to the god, and myths arose telling how he had once slain the animal. In this case, tree and bull, really identical, would be mythically regarded as destroyed by the god whom they had once represented. If Esus was a god of vegetation, once represented by a tree, this would explain why, as the scholiast on Lucan relates, human sacrifices to Esus were suspended from a tree. Esus was worshipped at Paris and at Trèves; a coin with the name *Æsus* was found in England; and personal names like *Esugenos*, "son of Esus," and *Esunertus*, "he who has the strength of Esus," occur in England, France, and Switzerland.<sup>61</sup> Thus the cult of this god may have been comparatively widespread. But there is no evidence that he was a Celtic Jehovah or a member, with Teutates and Taranis, of a pan-Celtic triad, or that this triad, introduced by Gauls, was not accepted by the Druids.<sup>62</sup> Had such a great triad existed, some instance of the occurrence of the three names on one

inscription would certainly have been found. Lucan does not refer to the gods as a triad, nor as gods of all the Celts, or even of one tribe. He lays stress merely on the fact that they were worshipped with human sacrifice, and they were apparently more or less well-known local gods.<sup>63</sup>

The insular Celts believed that some of their gods lived on or in hills. We do not know whether such a belief was entertained by the Gauls, though some of their deities were worshipped on hills, like the Puy de Dôme. There is also evidence of mountain worship among them. One inscription runs, "To the Mountains"; a god of the Pennine Alps, Poeninus, was equated with Juppiter; and the god of the Vosges mountains was called Vosegus, perhaps still surviving in the giant supposed to haunt them.<sup>64</sup>

Certain grouped gods, *Dii Casses*, were worshipped by Celts on the right bank of the Rhine, but nothing is known regarding their functions, unless they were road gods. The name means "beautiful" or "pleasant," and *Cassi* appears in personal and tribal names, and also in *Cassiterides*, an early name of Britain, perhaps signifying that the new lands were "more beautiful" than those the Celts had left. When tin was discovered in Britain, the Mediterranean traders called it (chassiteros), after the name of the place where it was found, as *cupreus*, "copper," was so called from Cyprus.<sup>65</sup>

Many local tutelar divinities were also worshipped. When a new settlement was founded, it was placed under the protection of a tribal god, or the name of some divinised river on whose banks the village was placed, passed to the village itself, and the divinity became its protector. Thus Dea Bibracte, Nemausus, and Vasio were tutelar divinities of Bibracte, Nîmes, and Vaison. Other places were called after Belenos, or a group of divinities, usually the *Matres* with a local epithet, watched over a certain district.<sup>66</sup> The founding of a town was celebrated in an annual festival, with sacrifices and libations to the protecting deity, a practice combated by S. Eloi in the eighth century. But the custom of associating a divinity with a town or region was a great help to patriotism. Those who fought for their homes felt that they were fighting for their gods, who also fought on their side. Several inscriptions, "To the genius of the place," occur in Britain, and there are a



few traces of tutelar gods in Irish texts, but generally local saints had taken their place.

The Celtic cult of goddesses took two forms, that of individual and that of grouped goddesses, the latter much more numerous than the grouped gods. Individual goddesses were worshipped as consorts of gods, or as separate personalities, and in the latter case the cult was sometimes far extended. Still more popular was the cult of grouped goddesses. Of these the *Matres*, like some individual goddesses, were probably early Earth-mothers, and since the primitive fertility-cults included all that might then be summed up as "civilisation," such goddesses had already many functions, and might the more readily become divinities of special crafts or even of war. Many individual goddesses are known only by their names, and were of a purely local character.<sup>67</sup> Some local goddesses with different names but similar functions are equated with the same Roman goddess; others were never so equated.

The Celtic Minerva, or the goddesses equated with her, "taught the elements of industry and the arts,"<sup>68</sup> and is thus the equivalent of the Irish Brigit. Her functions are in keeping with the position of woman as the first civiliser—discovering agriculture, spinning, the art of pottery, etc. During this period goddesses were chiefly worshipped, and though the Celts had long outgrown this primitive stage, such culture-goddesses still retained their importance. A goddess equated with Minerva in Southern France and Britain is Belisama, perhaps from *qval*, "to burn" or "shine."<sup>69</sup> Hence she may have been associated with a cult of fire, like Brigit and like another goddess Sul, equated with Minerva at Bath and in Hesse, and in whose temple perpetual fires burned.<sup>70</sup> She was also a goddess of hot springs. Belisama gave her name to the Mersey,<sup>71</sup> and many goddesses in Celtic myth are associated with rivers.

Some war-goddesses are associated with Mars—Nemetona (in Britain and Germany), perhaps the same as the Irish Nemon, and Cathubodua, identical with the Irish war-goddess Badb-catha, "battle-crow," who tore the bodies of the slain.<sup>72</sup> Another goddess Andrasta, "invincible," perhaps the

same as the Andarta of the Voconces, was worshipped by the people of Boudicca with human sacrifices, like the native Bellona of the Scordisci.<sup>73</sup>

A goddess of the chase was identified with Artemis in Galatia, where she had a priestess Camma, and also in the west. At the feast of the Galatian goddess dogs were crowned with flowers, her worshippers feasted and a sacrifice was made to her, feast and sacrifice being provided out of money laid aside for every animal taken in the chase.<sup>74</sup> Other goddesses were equated with Diana, and one of her statues was destroyed in Christian times at Trèves.<sup>75</sup> These goddesses may have been thought of as rushing through the forest with an attendant train, since in later times Diana, with whom they were completely assimilated, became, like Holda, the leader of the "furious host" and also of witches' revels.<sup>76</sup> The Life of Cæsarius of Arles speaks of a "demon" called Diana by the rustics. A bronze statuette represents the goddess riding a wild boar,<sup>77</sup> her symbol and, like herself, a creature of the forest, but at an earlier time itself a divinity of whom the goddess became the anthropomorphic form.

Goddesses, the earlier spirits of the waters, protected rivers and springs, or were associated with gods of healing wells. Dirona or Sirona is associated with Grannos mainly in Eastern Gaul and the Rhine provinces, and is sometimes represented carrying grapes and grain.<sup>78</sup> Thus this goddess may once have been connected with fertility, perhaps an Earth-mother, and if her name means "the long-lived,"<sup>79</sup> this would be an appropriate title for an Earth-goddess. Another goddess, Stanna, mentioned in an inscription at Perigueux, is perhaps "the standing or abiding one," and thus may also have been Earth-goddess.<sup>80</sup> Grannos was also associated with the local goddesses Vesunna and Aventia, who gave their names to Vesona and Avanche. His statue also stood in the temple of the goddess of the Seine, Sequana.<sup>81</sup> With Bormo were associated Bormana in Southern Gaul, and Damona in Eastern Gaul—perhaps an animal goddess, since the root of her name occurs in Irish *dam*, "ox," and Welsh *dafad*, "sheep." Dea Brixia was the consort of Luxovius, god of the waters of Luxeuil. Names of other goddesses of the waters are found on *ex votos* and plaques which were

placed in or near them. The Roman Nymphæ, sometimes associated with Bormo, were the equivalents of the Celtic water-goddesses, who survived in the water-fairies of later folk-belief. Some river-goddesses gave their names to many rivers in the Celtic area—the numerous Avons being named from Abnoba, goddess of the sources of the Danube, and the many Dees and Dives from Divona. Clota was goddess of the Clyde, Sabrina had her throne "beneath the translucent wave" of the Severn, Icauna was goddess of the Yonne, Sequana of the Seine, and Sinnan of the Shannon.

In some cases forests were ruled by goddesses—that of the Ardennes by Dea Arduinna, and the Black Forest, perhaps because of the many waters in it, by Dea Abnoba.<sup>82</sup> While some goddesses are known only by being associated with a god, *e.g.* Kosmerta with Mercury in Eastern Gaul, others have remained separate, like Epona, perhaps a river-goddess merged with an animal divinity, and known from inscriptions as a horse-goddess.<sup>83</sup> But the most striking instance is found in the grouped goddesses.

Of these the *Deoe Matres*, whose name has taken a Latin form and whose cult extended to the Teutons, are mentioned in many inscriptions all over the Celtic area, save in East and North-West Gaul.<sup>84</sup> In art they are usually represented as three in number, holding fruit, flowers, a cornucopia, or an infant. They were thus goddesses of fertility, and probably derived from a cult of a great Mother-goddess, the Earth personified. She may have survived as a goddess Berecynthia; worshipped at Autun, where her image was borne through the fields to promote fertility, or as the goddesses equated with Demeter and Kore, worshipped by women on an island near Britain.<sup>85</sup> Such cults of a Mother-goddess lie behind many religions, but gradually her place was taken by an Earth-god, the Celtic Dispater or Dagda, whose consort the goddess became. She may therefore be the goddess with the cornucopia on monuments of the horned god, or Aeracura, consort of Dispater, or a goddess on a monument at Epinal holding a basket of fruit and a cornucopia, and accompanied by a ram's-headed serpent.<sup>86</sup> These symbols show that this goddess was akin to the *Matres*. But she sometimes preserved her individuality, as in the case of Berecynthia and the *Matres*, though it is not quite clear why she should have been thus triply

multiplied. A similar phenomenon is found in the close connection of Demeter and Persephone, while the Celts regarded three as a sacred number. The primitive division of the year into three seasons—spring, summer, and winter—may have had its effect in triplicating a goddess of fertility with which the course of the seasons was connected.<sup>87</sup> In other mythologies groups of three goddesses are found, the Hathors in Egypt, the Moirai, Gorgons, and Graiæ of Greece, the Roman Fates, and the Norse Nornæ, and it is noticeable that the *Matres* were sometimes equated with the *Parcæ* and Fates.<sup>88</sup>

In the *Matres*, primarily goddesses of fertility and plenty, we have one of the most popular and also primitive aspects of Celtic religion. They originated in an age when women cultivated the ground, and the Earth was a goddess whose cult was performed by priestesses. But in course of time new functions were bestowed on the *Matres*. Possibly river-goddesses and others are merely mothers whose functions have become specialised. The *Matres* are found as guardians of individuals, families, houses, of towns, a province, or a whole nation, as their epithets in inscriptions show. The *Matres Domesticæ* are household goddesses; the *Matres Treveræ*, or *Gallaicæ*, or *Vediantæ*, are the mothers of Trèves, of the Gallaecæ, of the Vediantii; the *Matres Nemetiales* are guardians of groves. Besides presiding over the fields as *Matres Campestræ* they brought prosperity to towns and people.<sup>89</sup> They guarded women, especially in childbirth, as *ex votos* prove, and in this aspect they are akin to the *Junones* worshipped also in Gaul and Britain. The name thus became generic for most goddesses, but all alike were the lineal descendants of the primitive Earth-mother.<sup>90</sup>

Popular superstition has preserved the memory of these goddesses in the three *bonnes dames*, *dames blanches*, and White Women, met by wayfarers in forests, or in the three fairies or wise women of folk-tales, who appear at the birth of children. But sometimes they have become hateful hags. The *Matres* and other goddesses probably survived in the beneficent fairies of rocks and streams, in the fairy Abonde who brought riches to houses, or Esterelle of Provence who made women fruitful, or Aril who watched over meadows, or in beings like Melusine, Viviane, and others.<sup>91</sup> In Gallo-

Roman Britain the cult of the *Matres* is found, but how far it was indigenous there is uncertain. A Welsh name for fairies, *Y Mamau*, "the Mothers," and the phrase, "the blessing of the Mothers" used of a fairy benediction, may be a reminiscence of such goddesses.<sup>92</sup> The presence of similar goddesses in Ireland will be considered later.<sup>93</sup> Images of the *Matres* bearing a child have sometimes been taken for those of the Virgin, when found accidentally, and as they are of wood blackened with age, they are known as *Vierges Noires*, and occupy an honoured place in Christian sanctuaries. Many churches of Nôtre Dame have been built on sites where an image of the Virgin is said to have been miraculously found—the image probably being that of a pagan Mother. Similarly, an altar to the *Matres* at Vaison is now dedicated to the Virgin as the "good Mother."<sup>94</sup>

In inscriptions from Eastern and Cisalpine Gaul, and from the Rhine and Danube region, the *Matronæ* are mentioned, and this name is probably indicative of goddesses like the *Matres*.<sup>95</sup> It is akin to that of many rivers, e.g. the Marne or Meyrone, and shows that the Mothers were associated with rivers. The Mother river fertilised a large district, and exhibited the characteristic of the whole group of goddesses.

Akin also to the *Matres* are the *Suleviæ*, guardian goddesses called *Matres* in a few inscriptions; the *Comedovæ*, whose name perhaps denotes guardianship or power; the *Dominæ*, who watched over the home, perhaps the *Dames* of mediæval folk-lore; and the *Virgines*, perhaps an appellative of the *Matres*, and significant when we find that virgin priestesses existed in Gaul and Ireland.<sup>96</sup> The *Proxumæ* were worshipped in Southern Gaul, and the *Quadriviæ*, goddesses of cross-roads, at Cherbourg.<sup>97</sup>

Some Roman gods are found on inscriptions without being equated with native deities. They may have been accepted by the Gauls as new gods, or they had perhaps completely ousted similar native gods. Others, not mentioned by Cæsar, are equated with native deities, Juno with Clivana, Saturn with Arvalus, and to a native Vulcan the Celts vowed spoils of war.<sup>98</sup> Again, many native gods are not equated with Roman deities on inscriptions. Apart from the divinities of Pyrenæan inscriptions, who may

not be Celtic, the names of over 400 native deities, whether equated with Roman gods or not, are known. Some of these names are mere epithets, and most of the gods are of a local character, known here by one name, there by another. Only in a very few cases can it be asserted that a god was worshipped over the whole Celtic area by one name, though some gods in Gaul, Britain, and Ireland with different names have certainly similar functions.<sup>99</sup>

The pantheon of the continental Celts was a varied one. Traces of the primitive agricultural rites, and of the priority of goddesses to gods, are found, and the vaguer aspects of primitive nature worship are seen behind the cult of divinities of sky, sun, thunder, forests, rivers, or in deities of animal origin. We come next to evidence of a higher stage, in divinities of culture, healing, the chase, war, and the underworld. We see divinities of Celtic groups—gods of individuals, the family, the tribe. Sometimes war-gods assumed great prominence, in time of war, or among the aristocracy, but with the development of commerce, gods associated with trade and the arts of peace came to the front.<sup>100</sup> At the same time the popular cults of agricultural districts must have remained as of old. With the adoption of Roman civilisation, enlightened Celts separated themselves from the lower aspects of their religion, but this would have occurred with growing civilisation had no Roman ever entered Gaul. In rural districts the more savage aspects of the cult would still have remained, but that these were entirely due to an aboriginal population is erroneous. The Celts must have brought such cults with them or adopted cults similar to their own wherever they came. The persistence of these cults is seen in the fact that though Christianity modified them, it could not root them out, and in out-of-the-way corners, survivals of the old ritual may still be found, for everywhere the old religion of the soil dies hard.

<sup>1.</sup> Cæsar, *de Bell. Gall.* vi. 17, 18.

<sup>2.</sup> Bloch (Lavissee), *Hist. de France*, i. 2, 419; Reinaoh, *BF* 13, 23.

<sup>3.</sup> *Trans. Gaelic Soc. of Inverness*, xxvi. p. 411 f.

<sup>4.</sup> Vallentin, *Les Dieux de la cité des Allobroges*, 15; Pliny, *HN* xxxiv. 7.



- [5.](#) These names are Alaunius, Arcecius, Artaius, Arvernorix, Arvernus, Adsmerius, Canetonensis, Clavariatis, Cissonius, Cimbrianus, Dumiat, Magniacus, Moecus, Toeirenius, Vassocaletus, Vellaunus, Visuovius, Biauxius, Cimiacinus, Naissatis. See Holder, *s.v.*
- [6.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 6.
- [7.](#) Hübner, vii. 271; *CIL* iii. 5773.
- [8.](#) Lucian, *Heracles*, 1 f. Some Gaulish coins figure a head to which are bound smaller heads. In one case the cords issue from the mouth (Blanchet, i. 308, 316-317). These may represent Lucian's Ogmios, but other interpretations have been put upon them. See Robert, *RC* vii. 388; Jullian, 84.
- [9.](#) The epithets and names are Anextiomarus, Belenos, Bormo, Borvo, or Bormanus, Cobledulitavus, Cosmis (?), Grannos, Livicus, Maponos, Mogo or Mogounos, Sianus, Toutiorix, Viudonnus, Virotutis. See Holder, *s.v.*
- [10.](#) Pommerol, *Ball. de Soc. d'ant. de Paris*, ii. fasc. 4.
- [11.](#) See Holder, *s.v.* Many place-names are derived from *Borvo*, e.g. Bourbon l'Archambaut, which gave its name to the Bourbon dynasty, thus connected with an old Celtic god.
- [12.](#) See p. 102, *infra*.
- [13.](#) Jul. Cap. *Maxim.* 22; Herodian, viii. 3; Tert. *Apol.* xxiv. 70; Auson. *Prof.* xi. 24.
- [14.](#) Stokes derives *belinuntia* from *beljo-*, a tree or leaf, Irish *bile*, *US* 174.
- [15.](#) Holder, *s.v.*; Stokes, *US* 197; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 23; see p. 180, *infra*.
- [16.](#) Diod. Sic. ii. 47.
- [17.](#) Apoll. Rhod. iv. 609.
- [18.](#) Albiorix, Alator, Arixo, Beladonnis, Barrex, Belatucadros, Bolvinnus, Braciaca, Britovis, Buxenus, Cabetius, Camulus, Cariocecius, Caturix, Cemenelus, Cicollus, Carrus, Cocosus, Cociduis, Condatis, Cnabetius, Corotiacus, Dinomogetimarus, Divanno, Dunatis, Glarinus, Halamardus, Harmogius, Ieusdrius, Lacavus, Latabius, Leucetius, Leucimalacus, Lenus, Mullo, Medocius, Mogetius, Nabelcus, Neton, Ocelos, Ollondios, Rudianus, Rigisamus, Randosatis, Riga, Segomo, Sinatis, Smertatius, Toutates, Tritullus, Vesucius, Vincius, Vitucadros, Vorocius. See Holder, *s.v.*
- [19.](#) D'Arbois, ii. 215; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 37.
- [20.](#) So Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 42.
- [21.](#) Hübner, 61.
- [22.](#) Holder, *s.v.*; Lucan, i. 444 f. The opinions of writers who take this view are collected by Reinach, *RC* xviii. 137.
- [23.](#) Holder, *s.v.* The Gaulish name Camulogenus, "born of Cumel," represents the same idea as in Fionn's surname, MacCumall.
- [24.](#) Athen. iv. 36; Dioscorides, ii. 110; Joyce, *SH* ii. 116, 120; *IT* i. 437, 697.
- [25.](#) Pliny, *HN* xviii. 7.

- [26.](#) Gaidoz, *Le Dieu Gaulois de Soleil*; Reinach, *CS* 98, *BF* 35; Blanchet, i. 27.
- [27.](#) Lucan, *Phar.* i. 444. Another form, Tanaros, may be simply the German Donar.
- [28.](#) Loth, i. 270.
- [29.](#) Gaidoz, *RC* vi. 457; Reinach, *OS* 65, 138; Blanchet, i. 160. The hammer is also associated with another Celtic Dispater, equated with Sylvanus, who was certainly not a thunder-god.
- [30.](#) Reinach, *BF* 137 f.; Courcelle-Seneuil, 115 f.
- [31.](#) Barthelemy, *RC* i. 1 f.
- [32.](#) See Flouest, *Rev. Arch.* v. 17.
- [33.](#) Reinach, *RC* xvii. 45.
- [34.](#) D'Arbois, ii. 126. He explains Nantosvelta as meaning "She who is brilliant in war." The goddess, however, has none of the attributes of a war-goddess. M. D'Arbois also saw in a bas-relief of the hammer-god, a female figure, and a child, the Gaulish equivalents of Balor, Ethne, and Lug (*RC* xv. 236). M. Reinach regards Sucellos, Nantosvelta, and a bird which is figured with them, as the same trio, because pseudo-Plutarch (*de Fluv.* vi. 4) says that *lougos* means "crow" in Celtic. This is more than doubtful. In any case Ethne has no warlike traits in Irish story, and as Lug and Balor were deadly enemies, it remains to be explained why they appear tranquilly side by side. See *RC* xxvi. 129. Perhaps Nantosvelta, like other Celtic goddesses, was a river nymph. *Nanto* Gaulish is "valley," and *nant* in old Breton is "gorge" or "brook." Her name might mean "shining river." See Stokes, *US* 193, 324.
- [35.](#) *RC* xviii. 254. Cernunnos may be the Juppiter Cernenos of an inscription from Pesth, Holder, s.v.
- [36.](#) Reinach, *BF* 186, fig. 177.
- [37.](#) *Rev. Arch.* xix. 322, pl. 9.
- [38.](#) Bertrand, *Rev. Arch.* xv. 339, xvi. pl. 12.
- [39.](#) *Ibid.* xv. pl. 9, 10.
- [40.](#) *Ibid.* xvi. 9.
- [41.](#) *Ibid.* pl. 12 *bis*.
- [42.](#) Bertrand, *Rev. Arch.* xvi. 8.
- [43.](#) *Ibid.* xvi. 10 f.
- [44.](#) *Ibid.* xv., xvi.; Reinach, *BF* 17, 191.
- [45.](#) *Bull. Epig.* i. 116; Strabo, iv. 3; Diod. Sic. v. 28.
- [46.](#) Diod. Sic. v. 30; Reinach, *BF* 193.
- [47.](#) See p. 212, *infra*.
- [48.](#) See p. 166, *infra*.
- [49.](#) See, e.g., Mowat, *Bull. Epig.* i. 29; de Witte, *Rev. Arch.* ii. 387, xvi. 7; Bertrand, *ibid.* xvi. 3.



- [50.](#) See pp. 102, 242, *infra*; Joyce, *SH* ii. 554; Curtin, 182; *RC* xxii. 123, xxiv. 18.
- [51.](#) Dom Martin, ii. 185; Reinach, *BF* 192, 199.
- [52.](#) See, however, p. 136, *infra*; and for another interpretation of this god as equivalent of the Irish Lug slaying Balor, see D'Arbois, ii. 287.
- [53.](#) See p. 229, *infra*.
- [54.](#) Reinach, *BF* 162, 184; Mowat, *Bull. Epig.* i. 62, *Rev. Epig.* 1887, 319, 1891, 84.
- [55.](#) Reinach, *BF* 141, 153, 175, 176, 181; see p. 218, *infra*. Flouest, *Rev. Arch.* 1885, i. 21, thinks that the identification was with an earlier chthonian Silvanus. Cf. Jullian, 17, note 3, who observes that the Gallo-Roman assimilations were made "sur le doinaire archaisant des faits populaires et rustiques de l'Italie." For the inscriptions, see Holder, *s.v.*
- [56.](#) Stokes, *US* 302; MacBain, 274; *RC* xxvi. 282.
- [57.](#) Gaidoz, *Rev. Arch.* ii. 1898; Mowat, *Bull. Epig.* i. 119; Courcelle-Seneuil, 80 f.; Pauly-Wissowa, *Real. Lex.* i. 667; Daremberg-Saglio, *Dict.* ii., *s.v.* "Dispater."
- [58.](#) Lucan, i. 444; *RC* xviii. 254, 258.
- [59.](#) See p. 127, *infra*.
- [60.](#) For a supposed connection between this bas-relief and the myth of Geryon, see Reinach, *BF* 120; *RC* xviii. 258 f.
- [61.](#) *Coins of the Ancient Britons*, 386; Holder, i. 1475, 1478.
- [62.](#) For these theories see Dom Martin, ii. 2; Bertrand, 335 f.
- [63.](#) Cf. Reinach, *RC* xviii. 149.
- [64.](#) Orelli, 2107, 2072; Monnier, 532; Tacitus, xxi. 38.
- [65.](#) Holder, i. 824; Reinach, *Rev. Arch.* xx. 262; D'Arbois, *Les Celtes*, 20. Other grouped gods are the Bacucei, Castoei, Icotii, Ifles, Lugoves, Nervini, and Silvani. See Holder, *s.v.*
- [66.](#) For all these see Holder, *s.v.*
- [67.](#) Professor Anwyl gives the following statistics: There are 35 goddesses mentioned once, 2 twice, 3 thrice, 1 four times, 2 six times, 2 eleven times, 1 fourteen times (Sirona), 1 twenty-one times (Rosmerta), 1 twenty-six times (Epona) (*Trans. Gael. Soc. Inverness*, xxvi. 413).
- [68.](#) Cæsar, vi. 17.
- [69.](#) D'Arbois, *Les Celtes*, 54; *Rev. Arch.* i. 201. See Holder, *s.v.*
- [70.](#) Solinus, xxii. 10; Holder, *s.v.*
- [71.](#) Ptolemy, ii. 2.
- [72.](#) See p. 71, *infra*.
- [73.](#) Dio Cass. lxii. 7; Amm. Mare, xxvii. 4. 4.
- [74.](#) Plutarch, *de Vir. Mul.* 20; Arrian, *Cyneg.* xxxiv. 1.

- [75.](#) S. Greg. *Hist.* viii. 15.
- [76.](#) Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* 283, 933; Reinach, *RC* xvi. 261.
- [77.](#) Reinach, *BF* 50.
- [78.](#) Holder, i. 1286; Robert, *RC* iv. 133.
- [79.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 27.
- [80.](#) Anwyl, *Celt. Rev.* 1906, 43.
- [81.](#) Holder, s.v.; Bulliot, *RC* ii. 22.
- [82.](#) Holder, i. 10, 89.
- [83.](#) Holder, s.v.; see p. 213, *infra*.
- [84.](#) Holder, ii. 463. They are very numerous in South-East Gaul, where also three-headed gods are found.
- [85.](#) See pp. 274-5, *infra*.
- [86.](#) Courcelle-Seneuil, 80-81.
- [87.](#) See my article "Calendar" in Hastings' *Encyclop. of Religion and Ethics*, iii. 80.
- [88.](#) *CIL* v. 4208, 5771, vii. 927; Holder, ii. 89.
- [89.](#) For all these titles see Holder, s.v.
- [90.](#) There is a large literature devoted to the *Matres*. See De Wal, *Die Mæder Göttern*; Vallentin, *Le Culte des Matræ*; Daremberg-Saglio, *Dict.* s.v. *Matres*; Ihm, *Jahrbuch. des Vereins von Alterth. in Rheinlande*, No. 83; Roscher, *Lexicon*, ii. 2464 f.
- [91.](#) See Maury, *Fées du Moyen Age*; Sébillot, i. 262; Monnier, 439 f.; Wright, *Celt, Roman, and Saxon*, 286 f.; Vallentin, *RC* iv. 29. The *Matres* may already have had a sinister aspect in Roman times, as they appear to be intended by an inscription *Lamiis Tribus* on an altar at Newcastle. Hübner, 507.
- [92.](#) Anwyl, *Celt. Rev.* 1906, 28. Cf. *Y Foel Famau*, "the hill of the Mothers," in the Clwydian range.
- [93.](#) See p. 73, *infra*.
- [94.](#) Vallentin, *op. cit.* iv. 29; Maury, *Croyances du Moyen Age*, 382.
- [95.](#) Holder, s.v.
- [96.](#) See pp. 69, 317, *infra*.
- [97.](#) For all these see Holder, s.v.; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 103; *RC* iv. 34.
- [98.](#) Florus, ii. 4.
- [99.](#) See the table of identifications, p. 125, *infra*.
- [100.](#) We need not assume with Jullian, 18, that there was one supreme god, now a war-god, now a god of peace. Any prominent god may have become a war-god on occasion.

# The Irish Mythological Cycle

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Three divine and heroic cycles of myths are known in Ireland, one telling of the Tuatha Dé Danann, the others of Cúchulainn and of the Fians. They are distinct in character and contents, but the gods of the first cycle often help the heroes of the other groups, as the gods of Greece and India assisted the heroes of the epics. We shall see that some of the personages of these cycles may have been known in Gaul; they are remembered in Wales, but, in the Highlands, where stories of Cúchulainn and Fionn are still told, the Tuatha Dé Danann are less known now than in 1567, when Bishop Carsewell lamented the love of the Highlanders for "idle, turbulent, lying, worldly stories concerning the Tuatha Dédanans."<sup>101</sup>

As the new Achæan religion in Greece and the Vedic sacred books of India regarded the aboriginal gods and heroes as demons and goblins, so did Christianity in Ireland sometimes speak of the older gods there. On the other hand, it was mainly Christian scribes who changed the old mythology into history, and made the gods and heroes kings. Doubtless myths already existed, telling of the descent of rulers and people from divinities, just as the Gauls spoke of their descent from Dispater, or as the Incas of Peru, the Mikados of Japan, and the kings of Uganda considered themselves offspring of the gods. This is a universal practice, and made it the more easy for Christian chroniclers to transmute myth into history. In Ireland, as elsewhere, myth doubtless told of monstrous races inhabiting the land in earlier days, of the strife of the aborigines and incomers, and of their gods, though the aboriginal gods may in some cases have been identified with Celtic gods, or worshipped in their own persons. Many mythical elements may therefore be looked for in the euhemerised chronicles of ancient Ireland. But the chroniclers themselves were but the continuers of a process which must have been at work as soon as the influence of Christianity began to be felt.<sup>102</sup> Their passion, however, was to show the descent of the Irish and the older peoples from the old Biblical personages, a process dear

to the modern Anglo-Israelite, some of whose arguments are based on the wild romancing of the chroniclers.

Various stories were told of the first peopling of Ireland. Banba, with two other daughters of Cain, arrived with fifty women and three men, only to die of the plague. Three fishermen next discovered Ireland, and "of the island of Banba of Fair Women with hardihood they took possession." Having gone to fetch their wives, they perished in the deluge at Tuath Inba.<sup>103</sup> A more popular account was that of the coming of Cessair, Noah's granddaughter, with her father, husband, a third man, Ladru, "the first dead man of Erin," and fifty damsels. Her coming was the result of the advice of a *laimh-dhia*, or "hand-god," but their ship was wrecked, and all save her husband, Finntain, who survived for centuries, perished in the flood.<sup>104</sup> Cessair's ship was less serviceable than her grandparent's! Followed the race of Partholan, "no wiser one than the other," who increased on the land until plague swept them away, with the exception of Tuan mac Caraill, who after many transformations, told the story of Ireland to S. Finnen centuries after.<sup>105</sup> The survival of Finntain and Tuan, doubles of each other, was an invention of the chroniclers, to explain the survival of the history of colonists who had all perished. Keating, on the other hand, rejecting the sole survivor theory as contradictory to Scripture, suggests that "aerial demons," followers of the invaders, revealed all to the chroniclers, unless indeed they found it engraved with "an iron pen and lead in the rocks."<sup>106</sup>

Two hundred years before Partholan's coming, the Fomorians had arrived,<sup>107</sup> and they and their chief Cichol Gricenchos fought Partholan at Mag Itha, where they were defeated. Cichol was footless, and some of his host had but one arm and one leg.<sup>108</sup> They were demons, according to the chroniclers, and descendants of the luckless Ham. Nennius makes Partholan and his men the first Scots who came from Spain to Ireland. The next arrivals were the people of Nemed who returned to Spain, whence they came (Nennius), or died to a man (Tuan). They also were descendants of the inevitable Noah, and their sojourn in Ireland was much disturbed by the Fomorians who had recovered from their defeat, and finally overpowered

the Nemedians after the death of Nemed.<sup>[109](#)</sup> From Tory Island the Fomorians ruled Ireland, and forced the Nemedians to pay them annually on the eve of Samhain (Nov. 1st) two-thirds of their corn and milk and of the children born during the year. If the Fomorians are gods of darkness, or, preferably, aboriginal deities, the tribute must be explained as a dim memory of sacrifice offered at the beginning of winter when the powers of darkness and blight are in the ascendant. The Fomorians had a tower of glass in Tory Island. This was one day seen by the Milesians, to whom appeared on its battlements what seemed to be men. A year after they attacked the tower and were overwhelmed in the sea.<sup>[110](#)</sup> From the survivors of a previously wrecked vessel of their fleet are descended the Irish. Another version makes the Nemedians the assailants. Thirty of them survived their defeat, some of them going to Scotland or Man (the Britons), some to Greece (to return as the Firbolgs), some to the north, where they learned magic and returned as the Tuatha Dé Danann.<sup>[111](#)</sup> The Firbolgs, "men of bags," resenting their ignominious treatment by the Greeks, escaped to Ireland. They included the Firbolgs proper, the Fir-Domnann, and the Galioin.<sup>[112](#)</sup> The Fomorians are called their gods, and this, with the contemptuous epithets bestowed on them, may point to the fact that the Firbolgs were the pre-Celtic folk of Ireland and the Fomorians their divinities, hostile to the gods of the Celts or regarded as dark deities. The Firbolgs are vassals of Ailill and Medb, and with the Fir Domnann and Galioin are hostile to Cúchulainn and his men,<sup>[113](#)</sup> just as Fomorians were to the Tuatha Dé Danann. The strifes of races and of their gods are inextricably confused.

The Tuatha Dé Danann arrived from heaven—an idea in keeping with their character as beneficent gods, but later legend told how they came from the north. They reached Ireland on Beltane, shrouded in a magic mist, and finally, after one or, in other accounts, two battles, defeated the Firbolgs and Fomorians at Magtured. The older story of one battle may be regarded as a euhemerised account of the seeming conflict of nature powers.<sup>[114](#)</sup> The first battle is described in a fifteenth to sixteenth century MS.,<sup>[115](#)</sup> and is referred

to in a fifteenth century account of the second battle, full of archaic reminiscences, and composed from various earlier documents.<sup>116</sup> The Firbolgs, defeated in the first battle, join the Fomorians, after great losses. Meanwhile Nuada, leader of the Tuatha Dé Danann, lost his hand, and as no king with a blemish could sit on the throne, the crown was given to Bres, son of the Fomorian Elatha and his sister Eri, a woman of the Tuatha Dé Danann. One day Eri espied a silver boat speeding to her across the sea. From it stepped forth a magnificent hero, and without delay the pair, like the lovers in Theocritus, "rejoiced in their wedlock." The hero, Elatha, foretold the birth of Eri's son, so beautiful that he would be a standard by which to try all beautiful things. He gave her his ring, but she was to part with it only to one whose finger it should fit. This was her child Bres, and by this token he was later, as an exile, recognised by his father, and obtained his help against the Tuatha Dé Danann. Like other wonderful children, Bres grew twice as quickly as any other child until he was seven.<sup>117</sup> Though Elatha and Eri are brother and sister, she is among the Tuatha Dé Danann.<sup>118</sup> There is the usual inconsistency of myth here and in other accounts of Fomorian and Tuatha Dé Danann unions. The latter had just landed, but already had united in marriage with the Fomorians. This inconsistency escaped the chroniclers, but it points to the fact that both were divine not human, and that, though in conflict, they united in marriage as members of hostile tribes often do.

The second battle took place twenty-seven years after the first, on Samhain. It was fought like the first on the plain of Mag-tured, though later accounts made one battle take place at Mag-tured in Mayo, the other at Mag-tured in Sligo.<sup>119</sup> Inconsistently, the conquering Tuatha Dé Danann in the interval, while Bres is their king, must pay tribute imposed by the Fomorians. Obviously in older accounts this tribute must have been imposed before the first battle and have been its cause. But why should gods, like the Tuatha Dé Danann, ever have been in subjection? This remains to be seen, but the answer probably lies in parallel myths of the subjection or death of divinities like Ishtar, Adonis, Persephone, and Osiris. Bres having exacted a tribute of the milk of all hornless dun cows, the cows

of Ireland were passed through fire and smeared with ashes—a myth based perhaps on the Beltane fire ritual.<sup>120</sup> The avaricious Bres was satirised, and "nought but decay was on him from that hour,"<sup>121</sup> and when Nuada, having recovered, claimed the throne, he went to collect an army of the Fomorians, who assembled against the Tuatha Dé Danann. In the battle Indech wounded Ogma, and Balor slew Nuada, but was mortally wounded by Lug. Thereupon the Fomorians fled to their own region.

The Tuatha Dé Danann remained masters of Ireland until the coming of the Milesians, so named from an eponymous Mile, son of Bile. Ith, having been sent to reconnoitre, was slain, and the Milesians now invaded Ireland in force. In spite of a mist raised by the Druids, they landed, and, having met the three princes who slew Ith, demanded instant battle or surrender of the land. The princes agreed to abide by the decision of the Milesian poet Amairgen, who bade his friends re-embark and retire for the distance of nine waves. If they could then effect a landing, Ireland was theirs. A magic storm was raised, which wrecked many of their ships, but Amairgen recited verses, fragments, perhaps, of some old ritual, and overcame the dangers. After their defeat the survivors of the Tuatha Dé Danann retired into the hills to become a fairy folk, and the Milesians (the Goidels or Scots) became ancestors of the Irish.

Throughout the long story of the conquests of Ireland there are many reduplications, the same incidents being often ascribed to different personages.<sup>122</sup> Different versions of similar occurrences, based on older myths and traditions, may already have been in existence, and ritual practices, dimly remembered, required explanation. In the hands of the chroniclers, writing history with a purpose and combining their information with little regard to consistency, all this was reduced to a more or less connected narrative. At the hands of the prosaic chroniclers divinity passed from the gods, though traces of it still linger.

"Ye are gods, and, behold, ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.

In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the



changes of things,  
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall  
forget you for kings."

From the annalistic point of view the Fomorians are sea demons or pirates, their name being derived from *muir*, "sea," while they are descended along with other monstrous beings from them. Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, while connecting the name with Welsh *foawr*, "giant" (Gaelic *famhair*), derives the name from *fo*, "under," and *muir*, and regards them as submarine beings.<sup>123</sup> Dr. MacBain connected them with the fierce powers of the western sea personified, like the *Muireartach*, a kind of sea hag, of a Fionn ballad.<sup>124</sup> But this association of the Fomorians with the ocean may be the result of a late folk-etymology, which wrongly derived their name from *muir*. The Celtic experience of the Lochlanners or Norsemen, with whom the Fomorians are associated,<sup>125</sup> would aid the conception of them as sea-pirates of a more or less demoniacal character. Dr. Stokes connects the second syllable *mor* with *mare* in "nightmare," from *moro*, and regards them as subterranean as well as submarine.<sup>126</sup> But the more probable derivation is that of Zimmer and D'Arbois, from *fo* and *morio* (*mor*, "great"),<sup>127</sup> which would thus agree with the tradition which regarded them as giants. They were probably beneficent gods of the aborigines, whom the Celtic conquerors regarded as generally evil, perhaps equating them with the dark powers already known to them. They were still remembered as gods, and are called "champions of the *síd*," like the Tuatha Dé Danann.<sup>128</sup> Thus King Bres sought to save his life by promising that the kine of Ireland would always be in milk, then that the men of Ireland would reap every quarter, and finally by revealing the lucky days for ploughing, sowing, and reaping.<sup>129</sup> Only an autochthonous god could know this, and the story is suggestive of the true nature of the Fomorians. The hostile character attributed to them is seen from the fact that they destroyed corn, milk, and fruit. But in Ireland, as elsewhere, this destructive power was deprecated by begging them not to destroy "corn nor milk in Erin beyond their fair tribute."<sup>130</sup> Tribute was also paid to them on Samhain, the time when the



powers of blight feared by men are in the ascendant. Again, the kingdom of Balor, their chief, is still described as the kingdom of cold.<sup>131</sup> But when we remember that a similar "tribute" was paid to Cromm Cruaich, a god of fertility, and that after the conquest of the Tuatha Dé Danann they also were regarded as hostile to agriculture,<sup>132</sup> we realise that the Fomorians must have been aboriginal gods of fertility whom the conquering Celts regarded as hostile to them and their gods. Similarly, in folk-belief the beneficent corn-spirit has sometimes a sinister and destructive aspect.<sup>133</sup> Thus the stories of "tribute" would be distorted reminiscences of the ritual of gods of the soil, differing little in character from that of the similar Celtic divinities. What makes it certain that the Fomorians were aboriginal gods is that they are found in Ireland before the coming of the early colonist Partholan. They were the gods of the pre-Celtic folk—Firbolgs, Fir Domnann, and Galioin<sup>134</sup>—all of them in Ireland before the Tuatha Dé Danaan arrived, and all of them regarded as slaves, spoken of with the utmost contempt. Another possibility, however, ought to be considered. As the Celtic gods were local in character, and as groups of tribes would frequently be hostile to other groups, the Fomorians may have been local gods of a group at enmity with another group, worshipping the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

The strife of Fomorians and Tuatha Dé Danann suggests the dualism of all nature religions. Demons or giants or monsters strive with gods in Hindu, Greek, and Teutonic mythology, and in Persia the primitive dualism of beneficent and hurtful powers of nature became an ethical dualism—the eternal opposition of good and evil. The sun is vanquished by cloud and storm, but shines forth again in vigour. Vegetation dies, but undergoes a yearly renewal. So in myth the immortal gods are wounded and slain in strife. But we must not push too far the analogy of the apparent strife of the elements and the wars of the gods. The one suggested the other, especially where the gods were elemental powers. But myth-making man easily developed the suggestion; gods were like men and "could never get eneuch o' fechtin'." The Celts knew of divine combats before their arrival in Ireland, and their own hostile powers were easily assimilated to the hostile gods of the aborigines.

The principal Fomorians are described as kings. Elatha was son of Nét, described by Cormac as "a battle god of the heathen Gael," i.e. he is one of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and has as wives two war-goddesses, Badb and Nemaind.<sup>135</sup> Thus he resembles the Fomorian Tethra whose wife is a *badb* or "battle-crow," preying on the slain.<sup>136</sup> Elatha's name, connected with words meaning "knowledge," suggests that he was an aboriginal culture-god.<sup>137</sup> In the genealogies, Fomorians and Tuatha Dé Danann are inextricably mingled. Bres's temporary position as king of the Tuatha Déa may reflect some myth of the occasional supremacy of the powers of blight. Want and niggardliness characterise his reign, and after his defeat a better state of things prevails. Bres's consort was Brigit, and their son Ruadan, sent to spy on the Tuatha Dé Danann, was slain. His mother's wailing for him was the first mourning wail ever heard in Erin.<sup>138</sup> Another god, Indech, was son of Déa Domnu, a Fomorian goddess of the deep, i.e. of the underworld and probably also of fertility, who may hold a position among the Fomorians similar to that of Danu among the Tuatha Dé Danann. Indech was slain by Ogma, who himself died of wounds received from his adversary.

Balor had a consort Cethlenn, whose venom killed Dagda. His one eye had become evil by contact with the poisonous fumes of a concoction which his father's Druids were preparing. The eyelid required four men to raise it, when his evil eye destroyed all on whom its glance fell. In this way Balor would have slain Lug at Mag-tured, but the god at once struck the eye with a sling-stone and slew him.<sup>139</sup> Balor, like the Greek Medusa, is perhaps a personification of the evil eye, so much feared by the Celts. Healthful influences and magical charms avert it; hence Lug, a beneficent god, destroys Balor's maleficence.

Tethra, with Balor and Elatha, ruled over Erin at the coming of the Tuatha Dé Danann. From a phrase used in the story of Connla's visit to Elysium, "Thou art a hero of the men of Tethra," M. D'Arbois assumes that Tethra was ruler of Elysium, which he makes one with the land of the dead. The passage, however, bears a different interpretation, and though a Fomorian, Tethra, a god of war, might be regarded as lord of all warriors.<sup>140</sup>

Elysium was not the land of the dead, and when M. D'Arbois equates Tethra with Kronos, who after his defeat became ruler of a land of dead heroes, the analogy, like other analogies with Greek mythology, is misleading. He also equates Bres, as temporary king of the Tuatha Dé Danann, with Kronos, king of heaven in the age of gold. Kronos, again, slain by Zeus, is parallel to Balor slain by his grandson Lug. Tethra, Bres, and Balor are thus separate fragments of one god equivalent to Kronos.<sup>141</sup> Yet their personalities are quite distinct. Each race works out its mythology for itself, and, while parallels are inevitable, we should not allow these to override the actual myths as they have come down to us.

Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup> makes Bile, ancestor of the Milesians who came from Spain, a Goidelic counterpart of the Gaulish Dispatēr, lord of the dead, from whom the Gauls claimed descent. But Bile, neither a Fomorian nor of the Tuatha Dé Danann, is an imaginary and shadowy creation. Bile is next equated with a Brythonic Beli, assumed to be consort of Dôn, whose family are equivalent to the Tuatha Dé Danann.<sup>142</sup> Beli was a mythic king whose reign was a kind of golden age, and if he was father of Dôn's children, which is doubtful, Bile would then be father of the Tuatha Dé Danann. But he is ancestor of the Milesians, their opponents according to the annalists. Beli is also equated with Elatha, and since Dôn, reputed consort of Beli, was grandmother of Llew, equated with Irish Lug, grandson of Balor, Balor is equivalent to Beli, whose name is regarded by Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup> as related etymologically to Balor's.<sup>143</sup> Bile, Balor, and Elatha are thus Goidelic equivalents of the shadowy Beli. But they also are quite distinct personalities, nor are they ever hinted at as ancestral gods of the Celts, or gods of a gloomy underworld. In Celtic belief the underworld was probably a fertile region and a place of light, nor were its gods harmful and evil, as Balor was.

On the whole, the Fomorians came to be regarded as the powers of nature in its hostile aspect. They personified blight, winter, darkness, and death, before which men trembled, yet were not wholly cast down, since the immortal gods of growth and light, rulers of the bright other-world, were on their side and fought against their enemies. Year by year the gods suffered

deadly harm, but returned as conquerors to renew the struggle once more. Myth spoke of this as having happened once for all, but it went on continuously.<sup>144</sup> Gods were immortal and only seemed to die. The strife was represented in ritual, since men believe that they can aid the gods by magic, rite, or prayer. Why, then, do hostile Fomorians and Tuatha Dé Danann intermarry? This happens in all mythologies, and it probably reflects, in the divine sphere, what takes place among men. Hostile peoples carry off each the other's women, or they have periods of friendliness and consequent intermarriage. Man makes his gods in his own image, and the problem is best explained by facts like these, exaggerated no doubt by the Irish annalists.

The Tuatha Dé Danann, in spite of their euhemerisation, are more than human. In the north where they learned magic, they dwelt in four cities, from each of which they brought a magical treasure—the stone of Fal, which "roared under every king," Lug's unconquerable spear, Nuada's irresistible sword, the Dagda's inexhaustible cauldron. But they are more than wizards or Druids. They are re-born as mortals; they have a divine world of their own, they interfere in and influence human affairs. The euhemerists did not go far enough, and more than once their divinity is practically acknowledged. When the Fian Caoilte and a woman of the Tuatha Dé Danann appear before S. Patrick, he asks, "Why is she youthful and beautiful, while you are old and wrinkled?" And Caoilte replies, "She is of the Tuatha Dé Danann, who are unfading and whose duration is perennial. I am of the sons of Milesius, that are perishable and fade away."<sup>145</sup>

After their conversion, the Celts, sons of Milesius, thought that the gods still existed in the hollow hills, their former dwellings and sanctuaries, or in far-off islands, still caring for their former worshippers. This tradition had its place with that which made them a race of men conquered by the Milesians—the victory of Christianity over paganism and its gods having been transmuted into a strife of races by the euhemerists. The new faith, not the people, conquered the old gods. The Tuatha Dé Danann became the *Daoine-sidhe*, a fairy folk, still occasionally called by their old name, just as

individual fairy kings or queens bear the names of the ancient gods. The euhemerists gave the Fomorians a monstrous and demoniac character, which they did not always give to the Tuatha Dé Danann; in this continuing the old tradition that Fomorians were hostile and the Tuatha Dé Danann beneficent and mild.

The mythological cycle is not a complete "body of divinity"; its apparent completeness results from the chronological order of the annalists. Fragments of other myths are found in the *Dindsenchas*; others exist as romantic tales, and we have no reason to believe that all the old myths have been preserved. But enough remains to show the true nature of the Tuatha Dé Danann—their supernatural character, their powers, their divine and unfailing food and drink, their mysterious and beautiful abode. In their contents, their personages, in the actions that are described in them, the materials of the "mythological cycle," show how widely it differs from the Cúchulainn and Fionn cycles.<sup>146</sup> "The white radiance of eternity" suffuses it; the heroic cycles, magical and romantic as they are, belong far more to earth and time.

<sup>101</sup>. For some Highland references to the gods in saga and *Märchen*, see *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, 10; Campbell, *WHT* ii. 77. The sea-god Lir is probably the Liur of Ossianic ballads (Campbell, *LF* 100, 125), and his son Manannan is perhaps "the Son of the Sea" in a Gaelic song (Carmichael, *CG* ii. 122). Manannan and his daughters are also known (Campbell, *witchcraft*, 83).

<sup>102</sup>. The euhemerising process is first seen in tenth century poems by Eochaid hua Flainn, but was largely the work of Flainn Manistrech, *ob.* 1056. It is found fully fledged in the *Book of Invasions*.

<sup>103</sup>. Keating, 105-106.

<sup>104</sup>. Keating, 107; *LL* 4*b*. Cf. *RC* xvi. 155.

<sup>105</sup>. *LL* 5.

<sup>106</sup>. Keating, 111. Giraldus Cambrensis, *Hist. Irel.* c. 2, makes Roanus survive and tell the tale of Partholan to S. Patrick. He is the Caoilte mac Ronan of other tales, a survivor of the Fians, who held many racy dialogues with the Saint. Keating abuses Giraldus for equating Roanus with Finntain in his "lying history," and for calling him Roanus instead of Ronanus, a mistake in which he, "the guide bull of the herd," is followed by others.

<sup>107</sup>. Keating, 164.

- [108.](#) *LL* 5*a*.
- [109.](#) Keating, 121; *LL* 6*a*; *RC* xvi. 161.
- [110.](#) Nennius, *Hist. Brit.* 13.
- [111.](#) *LL* 6, 8*b*.
- [112.](#) *LL* 6*b*, 127*a*; *IT* iii. 381; *RC* xvi. 81.
- [113.](#) *LL* 9*b*, 11*a*.
- [114.](#) See Cormac, *s.v.* "Nescoit," *LU* 51.
- [115.](#) *Harl. MSS.* 2, 17, pp. 90-99. Cf. fragment from *Book of Invasions* in *LL* 8.
- [116.](#) *Harl. MS.* 5280, translated in *RC* xii. 59 f.
- [117.](#) *RC* xii. 60; D'Arbois, v. 405 f.
- [118.](#) For Celtic brother-sister unions see p. 224.
- [119.](#) O'Donovan, *Annals*, i. 16.
- [120.](#) *RC* xv. 439.
- [121.](#) *RC* xii. 71.
- [122.](#) Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup> thinks the Partholan story is the aboriginal, the median the Celtic version of the same event. Partholan, with initial *p* cannot be Goidelic (*Scottish Review*, 1890, "Myth. Treatment of Celtic Ethnology").
- [123.](#) *HL* 591.
- [124.](#) *CM* ix. 130; Campbell *LF* 68.
- [125.](#) *RC* xii. 75.
- [126.](#) *US* 211.
- [127.](#) D'Arbois, ii. 52; *RC* xii. 476.
- [128.](#) *RC* xii. 73.
- [129.](#) *RC* xii. 105.
- [130.](#) *RC* xxii. 195.
- [131.](#) Larmime, "Kian, son of Kontje."
- [132.](#) See p. 78; *LL* 245*b*.
- [133.](#) Mannhardt, *Mythol. Forsch.* 310 f.
- [134.](#) "Fir Domnann," "men of Domna," a goddess (Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 597), or a god (D'Arbois, ii. 130). "Domna" is connected with Irish-words meaning "deep" (Windisch, *IT* i. 498; Stokes, *US* 153). Domna, or Domnu, may therefore have been a goddess of the deep, not the sea so much as the underworld, and so perhaps an Earth-mother from whom the Fir Domnann traced their descent.
- [135.](#) Cormac, *s.v.* "Neith"; D'Arbois, v. 400; *RC* xii. 61.

[136.](#) *LU* 50. Tethra is glossed *badb* (*IT* i. 820).

[137.](#) *IT* i. 521; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 274 f.

[138.](#) *RC* xii. 95.

[139.](#) *RC* xii. 101.

[140.](#) See p. 374.

[141.](#) D'Arbois, ii. 198, 375.

[142.](#) *HL* 90-91.

[143.](#) *HL* 274, 319, 643. For Beli, see p. 112, *infra*.

[144.](#) Whatever the signification of the battle of Mag-tured may be, the place which it was localised is crowded with Neolithic megaliths, dolmens, etc. To later fancy these were the graves of warriors slain in a great battle fought there, and that battle became the fight between Fomorians and Tuatha Dé Dananns. Mag-tured may have been the scene of a battle between their respective worshippers.

[145.](#) O'Grady, ii. 203.

[146.](#) It should be observed that, as in the Vedas, the Odyssey, the Japanese *Ko-ji-ki*, as well as in barbaric and savage mythologies, *Märchen* formulæ abound in the Irish mythological cycle.



# The Tuatha dé Danann

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The meaning formerly given to *Tuatha Dé Danann* was "the men of science who were gods," *danann* being here connected with *dán*, "knowledge." But the true meaning is "the tribes *or* folk of the goddess Danu,"<sup>147</sup> which agrees with the cognates *Tuatha* or *Fir Dea*, "tribes *or* men of the goddess." The name was given to the group, though Danu had only three sons, Brian, Iuchar, and Iucharbar. Hence the group is also called *fir tri ndea*, "men of the three gods."<sup>148</sup> The equivalents in Welsh story of Danu and her folk are Dôn and her children. We have seen that though they are described as kings and warriors by the annalists, traces of their divinity appear. In the Cúchulainn cycle they are supernatural beings and sometimes demons, helping or harming men, and in the Fionn cycle all these characteristics are ascribed to them. But the theory which prevailed most is that which connected them with the hills or mounds, the last resting-places of the mighty dead. Some of these bore their names, while other beings were also associated with the mounds (*síd*)—Fomorians and Milesian chiefs, heroes of the sagas, or those who had actually been buried in them.<sup>149</sup> Legend told how, after the defeat of the gods, the mounds were divided among them, the method of division varying in different versions. In an early version the Tuatha Dé Danann are immortal and the Dagda divides the *síd*.<sup>150</sup> But in a poem of Flann Manistrech (*ob.* 1056) they are mortals and die.<sup>151</sup> Now follows a regular chronology giving the dates of their reigns and their deaths, as in the poem of Gilla Coemain (eleventh century).<sup>152</sup> Hence another legend told how, Dagda being dead, Bodb Dearg divided the *síd*, yet even here Manannan is said to have conferred immortality upon the Tuatha Dé Danann.<sup>153</sup> The old pagan myths had shown that gods might die, while in ritual their representatives were slain, and this may have been the starting-point of the euhemerising process. But the divinity of the Tuatha Dé Danann is still recalled. Eochaid O'Flynn (tenth century), doubtful whether they are men or demons, concludes, "though I have treated of these



deities in order, yet have I not adored them."<sup>154</sup> Even in later times they were still thought of as gods in exile, a view which appears in the romantic tales and sagas existing side by side with the notices of the annalists. They were also regarded as fairy kings and queens, and yet fairies of a different order from those of ordinary tradition. They are "fairies or sprites with corporeal forms, endowed with immortality," and yet also *dei terreni* or *síde* worshipped by the folk before the coming of S. Patrick. Even the saint and several bishops were called by the fair pagan daughters of King Loegaire, *fir síde*, "men of the *síd*," that is, gods.<sup>155</sup> The *síd* were named after the names of the Tuatha Dé Danann who reigned in them, but the tradition being localised in different places, several mounds were sometimes connected with one god. The *síd* were marvellous underground palaces, full of strange things, and thither favoured mortals might go for a time or for ever. In this they correspond exactly to the oversea Elysium, the divine land.

But why were the Tuatha Dé Danann associated with the mounds? If fairies or an analogous race of beings were already in pagan times connected with hills or mounds, gods now regarded as fairies would be connected with them. Dr. Joyce and O'Curry think that an older race of aboriginal gods or *síd-folk* preceded the Tuatha Déa in the mounds.<sup>156</sup> These may have been the Fomorians, the "champions of the *síd*," while in *Mesca Ulad* the Tuatha Déa go to the underground dwellings and speak with the *síde* already there. We do not know that the fairy creed as such existed in pagan times, but if the *síde* and the Tuatha Dé Danann were once distinct, they were gradually assimilated. Thus the Dagda is called "king of the *síde*"; Aed Abrat and his daughters, Fand and Liban, and Labraid, Liban's husband, are called *síde*, and Manannan is Fand's consort.<sup>157</sup> Labraid's island, like the *síd* of Mider and the land to which women of the *síde* invite Connla, differs but little from the usual divine Elysium, while Mider, one of the *síde*, is associated with the Tuatha Dé Danann.<sup>158</sup> The *síde* are once said to be female, and are frequently supernatural women who run away or marry mortals.<sup>159</sup> Thus they may be a reminiscence of old Earth goddesses. But they are not exclusively female, since there are kings

of the *síde*, and as the name *Fir síde*, "men of the *síde*," shows, while S. Patrick and his friends were taken for *síd*-folk.

The formation of the legend was also aided by the old cult of the gods on heights, some of them sepulchral mounds, and now occasionally sites of Christian churches.<sup>160</sup> The Irish god Cenn Cruaich and his Welsh equivalent Penn Cruc, whose name survives in *Pennocrucium*, have names meaning "chief *or* head of the mound."<sup>161</sup> Other mounds or hills had also a sacred character. Hence gods worshipped at mounds, dwelling or revealing themselves there, still lingered in the haunted spots; they became fairies, or were associated with the dead buried in the mounds, as fairies also have been, or were themselves thought to have died and been buried there. The haunting of the mounds by the old gods is seen in a prayer of S. Columba's, who begs God to dispel "this host (*i.e.* the old gods) around the cairns that reigneth."<sup>162</sup> An early MS also tells how the Milesians allotted the underground part of Erin to the Tuatha Déa who now retired within the hills; in other words, they were gods of the hills worshipped by the Milesians on hills.<sup>163</sup> But, as we shall see, the gods dwelt elsewhere than in hills.<sup>164</sup>

Tumuli may already in pagan times have been pointed out as tombs of gods who died in myth or ritual, like the tombs of Zeus in Crete and of Osiris in Egypt. Again, fairies, in some aspects, are ghosts of the dead, and haunt tumuli; hence, when gods became fairies they would do the same. And once they were thought of as dead kings, any notable tumuli would be pointed out as theirs, since it is a law in folk-belief to associate tumuli or other structures not with the dead or with their builders, but with supernatural or mythical or even historical personages. If *síde* ever meant "ghosts," it would be easy to call the dead gods by this name, and to connect them with the places of the dead.<sup>165</sup>

Many strands went to the weaving of the later conception of the gods, but there still hung around them an air of mystery, and the belief that they were a race of men was never consistent with itself.

Danu gave her name to the whole group of gods, and is called their mother, like the Egyptian Neith or the Semitic Ishtar.<sup>166</sup> In the annalists she is daughter of Dagda, and has three sons. She may be akin to the goddess Anu, whom Cormac describes as "*mater deorum hibernensium*. It was well she nursed the gods." From her name he derives *ana*, "plenty," and two hills in Kerry are called "the Paps of Anu."<sup>167</sup> Thus as a goddess of plenty Danu or Anu may have been an early Earth-mother, and what may be a dim memory of Anu in Leicestershire confirms this view. A cave on the Dane Hills is called "Black Annis' Bower," and she is said to have been a savage woman who devoured human victims.<sup>168</sup> Earth-goddesses usually have human victims, and Anu would be no exception. In the cult of Earth divinities Earth and under-Earth are practically identical, while Earth-goddesses like Demeter and Persephone were associated with the underworld, the dead being Demeter's folk. The fruits of the earth with their roots below the surface are then gifts of the earth- or under-earth goddess. This may have been the case with Danu, for in Celtic belief the gifts of civilisation came from the underworld or from the gods. Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys finds the name Anu in the dat. *Anoniredi*, "chariot of Anu," in an inscription from Vaucluse, and the identification is perhaps established by the fact that goddesses of fertility were drawn through the fields in a vehicle.<sup>169</sup> Cormac also mentions Buanann as mother and nurse of heroes, perhaps a goddess worshipped by heroes.<sup>170</sup>

Danu is also identified with Brigit, goddess of knowledge (*dán*), perhaps through a folk-etymology. She was worshipped by poets, and had two sisters of the same name connected with leechcraft and smithwork.<sup>171</sup> They are duplicates or local forms of Brigit, a goddess of culture and of poetry, so much loved by the Celts. She is thus the equivalent of the Gaulish goddess equated with Minerva by Cæsar, and found on inscriptions as Minerva Belisama and Brigindo. She is the Dea Brigantia of British inscriptions.<sup>172</sup> One of the seats of her worship was the land of the Brigantes, of whom she was the eponymous goddess, and her name (cf. Ir. *brig*, "power" or "craft"; Welsh *bri*, "honour," "renown") suggests her high

functions. But her popularity is seen in the continuation of her personality and cult in those of S. Brigit, at whose shrine in Kildare a sacred fire, which must not be breathed on, or approached by a male, was watched daily by nineteen nuns in turn, and on the twentieth day by the saint herself.<sup>173</sup> Similar sacred fires were kept up in other monasteries,<sup>174</sup> and they point to the old cult of a goddess of fire, the nuns being successors of a virgin priesthood like the vestals, priestesses of Vesta. As has been seen, the goddesses Belisama and Sul, probably goddesses of fire, resembled Brigit in this.<sup>175</sup> But Brigit, like Vesta, was at once a goddess of fire and of fertility, as her connection with Candlemas and certain ritual survivals also suggest. In the Hebrides on S. Bride's day (Candlemas-eve) women dressed a sheaf of oats in female clothes and set it with a club in a basket called "Briid's bed." Then they called, "Briid is come, Briid is welcome." Or a bed was made of corn and hay with candles burning beside it, and Bride was invited to come as her bed was ready. If the mark of the club was seen in the ashes, this was an omen of a good harvest and a prosperous year.<sup>176</sup> It is also noteworthy that if cattle cropped the grass near S. Brigit's shrine, next day it was as luxuriant as ever.

Brigit, or goddesses with similar functions, was regarded by the Celts as an early teacher of civilisation, inspirer of the artistic, poetic, and mechanical faculties, as well as a goddess of fire and fertility. As such she far excelled her sons, gods of knowledge. She must have originated in the period when the Celts worshipped goddesses rather than gods, and when knowledge—leechcraft, agriculture, inspiration—were women's rather than men's. She had a female priesthood, and men were perhaps excluded from her cult, as the tabued shrine at Kildare suggests. Perhaps her fire was fed from sacred oak wood, for many shrines of S. Brigit were built under oaks, doubtless displacing pagan shrines of the goddess.<sup>177</sup> As a goddess, Brigit is more prominent than Danu, also a goddess of fertility, even though Danu is mother of the gods.

Other goddesses remembered in tradition are Cleena and Vera, celebrated in fairy and witch lore, the former perhaps akin to a river-goddess Clota, the Clutoida (a fountain-nymph) of the continental Celts; the

latter, under her alternative name Dirra, perhaps a form of a goddess of Gaul, Dirona.<sup>178</sup> Aine, one of the great fairy-queens of Ireland, has her seat at Knockainy in Limerick, where rites connected with her former cult are still performed for fertility on Midsummer eve. If they were neglected she and her troops performed them, according to local legend.<sup>179</sup> She is thus an old goddess of fertility, whose cult, even at a festival in which gods were latterly more prominent, is still remembered. She is also associated with the waters as a water-nymph captured for a time as a fairy-bride by the Earl of Desmond.<sup>180</sup> But older legends connect her with the *síd*. She was daughter of Eogabal, king of the *síd* of Knockainy, the grass on which was annually destroyed at Samhain by his people, because it had been taken from them, its rightful owners. Oilill Olomm and Ferchus resolved to watch the *síd* on Samhain-eve. They saw Eogabal and Aine emerge from it. Ferchus killed Eogabal, and Oilill tried to outrage Aine, who bit the flesh from his ear. Hence his name of "Bare Ear."<sup>181</sup> In this legend we see how earlier gods of fertility come to be regarded as hostile to growth. Another story tells of the love of Aillén, Eogabal's son, for Manannan's wife and that of Aine for Manannan. Aine offered her favours to the god if he would give his wife to her brother, and "the complicated bit of romance," as S. Patrick calls it, was thus arranged.<sup>182</sup>

Although the Irish gods are warriors, and there are special war-gods, yet war-goddesses are more prominent, usually as a group of three—Morrigan, Neman, and Macha. A fourth, Badb, sometimes takes the place of one of these, or is identical with Morrigan, or her name, like that of Morrigan, may be generic.<sup>183</sup> *Badb* means "a scald-crow," under which form the war-goddesses appeared, probably because these birds were seen near the slain. She is also called Badbcatha, "battle-Badb," and is thus the equivalent of *-athubodua*, or, more probably, *Cathubodua*, mentioned in an inscription from Haute-Savoie, while this, as well as personal names like *Boduogenos*, shows that a goddess Bodua was known to the Gauls.<sup>184</sup> The *badb* or battle-crow is associated with the Fomorian Tethra, but Badb herself is consort of a war-god Nét, one of the Tuatha Dé Danann, who may be the equivalent of

Neton, mentioned in Spanish inscriptions and equated with Mars. Elsewhere Neman is Nét's consort, and she may be the Nemetona of inscriptions, *e.g.* at Bath, the consort of Mars. Cormac calls Nét and Neman "a venomous couple," which we may well believe them to have been.<sup>185</sup> To Macha were devoted the heads of slain enemies, "Macha's mast," but she, according to the annalists, was slain at Mag-tured, though she reappears in the Cúchulainn saga as the Macha whose ill-treatment led to the "debility" of the Ulstermen.<sup>186</sup> The name Morrigan may mean "great queen," though Dr. Stokes, connecting *mor* with the same syllable in "Fomorian," explains it as "nightmare-queen."<sup>187</sup> She works great harm to the Fomorians at Mag-tured, and afterwards proclaims the victory to the hills, rivers, and fairy-hosts, uttering also a prophecy of the evils to come at the end of time.<sup>188</sup> She reappears prominently in the Cúchulainn saga, hostile to the hero because he rejects her love, yet aiding the hosts of Ulster and the Brown Bull, and in the end trying to prevent the hero's death.<sup>189</sup>

The prominent position of these goddesses must be connected with the fact that women went out to war—a custom said to have been stopped by Adamnan at his mother's request, and that many prominent heroines of the heroic cycles are warriors, like the British Boudicca, whose name may be connected with *boudi*, "victory." Specific titles were given to such classes of female warriors—*bangaisgedaig*, *banfeinnidi*, etc.<sup>190</sup> But it is possible that these goddesses were at first connected with fertility, their functions changing with the growing warlike tendencies of the Celts. Their number recalls that of the threefold *Matres*, and possibly the change in their character is hinted in the Romano-British inscription at Benwell to the *Lamiis Tribus*, since Morrigan's name is glossed *lamia*.<sup>191</sup> She is also identified with Anu, and is mistress of Dagda, an Earth-god, and with Badb and others expels the Fomorians when they destroyed the agricultural produce of Ireland.<sup>192</sup> Probably the scald-crow was at once the symbol and the incarnation of the war-goddesses, who resemble the Norse Valkyries, appearing sometimes as crows, and the Greek Keres, bird-like beings which drank the blood of the slain. It is also interesting to note that Badb, who has



the character of a prophetess of evil, is often identified with the "Washer at the Ford," whose presence indicates death to him whose armour or garments she seems to cleanse.<sup>193</sup>

The *Matres*, goddesses of fertility, do not appear by name in Ireland, but the triplication of such goddesses as Morrigan and Brigit, the threefold name of Dagda's wife, or the fact that Arm, Danu, and Buanan are called "mothers," while Buanan's name is sometimes rendered "good mother," may suggest that such grouped goddesses were not unknown. Later legend knows of white women who assist in spinning, or three hags with power over nature, or, as in the *Battle of Ventry*, of three supernatural women who fall in love with Conncrithir, aid him in fight, and heal his wounds. In this document and elsewhere is mentioned the "*síd* of the White Women."<sup>194</sup> Goddesses of fertility are usually goddesses of love, and the prominence given to females among the *síde*, the fact that they are often called *Be find*, "White Women," like fairies who represent the *Matres* elsewhere, and that they freely offer their love to mortals, may connect them with this group of goddesses. Again, when the Milesians arrived in Ireland, three kings of the Tuatha Déa had wives called Eriu, Banba, and Fotla, who begged that Ireland should be called after them. This was granted, but only Eriu (Erin) remained in general use.<sup>195</sup> The story is an ætiological myth explaining the names of Ireland, but the three wives may be a group like the *Matres*, guardians of the land which took its name from them.

Brian, Iuchar, and Iucharba, who give a title to the whole group, are called *tri dee Donand*, "the three gods (sons of) Danu," or, again, "gods of *dán*" (knowledge), perhaps as the result of a folk-etymology, associating *dân* with their mother's name Danu.<sup>196</sup> Various attributes are personified as their descendants, Wisdom being son of all three.<sup>197</sup> Though some of these attributes may have been actual gods, especially Ecne or Wisdom, yet it is more probable that the personification is the result of the subtleties of bardic science, of which similar examples occur.<sup>198</sup> On the other hand, the fact that Ecne is the son of three brothers, may recall some early practice of polyandry of which instances are met with in the sagas.<sup>199</sup> M. D'Arbois has

suggested that Iuchar and Iucharba are mere duplicates of Brian, who usually takes the leading place, and he identifies them with three kings of the Tuatha Déa reigning at the time of the Milesian invasion—MacCuill, MacCecht, and MacGrainne, so called, according to Keating, because the hazel (*coll*), the plough (*cecht*), and the sun (*grian*) were "gods of worship" to them. Both groups are grandsons of Dagda, and M. D'Arbois regards this second group as also triplicates of one god, because their wives Fotla, Banba, and Eriu all bear names of Ireland itself, are personifications of the land, and thus may be "reduced to unity."<sup>200</sup> While this reasoning is ingenious, it should be remembered that we must not lay too much stress upon Irish divine genealogies, while each group of three may have been similar local gods associated at a later time as brothers. Their separate personality is suggested by the fact that the Tuatha Dé Danann are called after them "the Men of the Three Gods," and their supremacy appears in the incident of Dagda, Lug, and Ogma consulting them before the fight at Mag-tured—a natural proceeding if they were gods of knowledge or destiny.<sup>201</sup> The brothers are said to have slain the god Cian, and to have been themselves slain by Lug, and on this seems to have been based the story of *The Children of Tuirenn*, in which they perish through their exertions in obtaining the *eric* demanded by Lug.<sup>202</sup> Here they are sons of Tuirenn, but more usually their mother Danu or Brigit is mentioned.

Another son of Brigit's was Ogma, master of poetry and inventor of *ogham* writing, the word being derived from his name.<sup>203</sup> It is more probable that Ogma's name is a derivative from some word signifying "speech" or "writing," and that the connection with "ogham" may be a mere folk-etymology. Ogma appears as the champion of the gods,<sup>204</sup> a position given him perhaps from the primitive custom of rousing the warriors' emotions by eloquent speeches before a battle. Similarly the Babylonian Marduk, "seer of the gods," was also their champion in fight. Ogma fought and died at Mag-tured; but in other accounts he survives, captures Tethra's sword, goes on the quest for Dagda's harp, and is given a *síd* after the Milesian victory. Ogma's counterpart in Gaul is Ogmíós, a Herakles and a god of eloquence, thus bearing the dual character of Ogma, while Ogma's



epithet *grianaineach*, "of the smiling countenance," recalls Lucian's account of the "smiling face" of Ogmíós.<sup>205</sup> Ogma's high position is the result of the admiration of bardic eloquence among the Celts, whose loquacity was proverbial, and to him its origin was doubtless ascribed, as well as that of poetry. The genealogists explain his relationship to the other divinities in different ways, but these confusions may result from the fact that gods had more than one name, of which the annalists made separate personalities. Most usually Ogma is called Brigit's son. Her functions were like his own, but in spite of the increasing supremacy of gods over goddesses, he never really eclipsed her.

Among other culture gods were those associated with the arts and crafts—the development of Celtic art in metal-work necessitating the existence of gods of this art. Such a god is Goibniu, eponymous god of smiths (Old Ir. *goba*, "smith"), and the divine craftsman at the battle of Mag-tured, making spears which never failed to kill.<sup>206</sup> Smiths have everywhere been regarded as uncanny—a tradition surviving from the first introduction of metal among those hitherto accustomed to stone weapons and tools. S. Patrick prayed against the "spells of women, smiths, and Druids," and it is thus not surprising to find that Goibniu had a reputation for magic, even among Christians. A spell for making butter, in an eighth century MS. preserved at S. Gall, appeals to his "science."<sup>207</sup> Curiously enough, Goibniu is also connected with the culinary art in myth, and, like Hephaistos, prepares the feast of the gods, while his ale preserves their immortality.<sup>208</sup> The elation produced by heady liquors caused them to be regarded as draughts of immortality, like Soma, Haoma, or nectar. Goibniu survives in tradition as the *Gobhan Saer*, to whom the building of round towers is ascribed.

Another god of crafts was Creidne the brazier (Ir. *cerd*, "artificer"; cf. Scots *caird*, "tinker"), who assisted in making a silver hand for Nuada, and supplied with magical rapidity parts of the weapons used at Mag-tured.<sup>209</sup> According to the annalists, he was drowned while bringing golden ore from Spain.<sup>210</sup> Luchtine, god of carpenters, provided spear-handles for the battle, and with marvellous skill flung them into the sockets of the spear-heads.<sup>211</sup>

Diancecht, whose name may mean "swift in power," was god of medicine, and, with Creidne's help, fashioned a silver hand for Nuada.<sup>212</sup> His son Miach replaced this by a magic restoration of the real hand, and in jealousy his father slew him—a version of the *Märchen* formula of the jealous master. Three hundred and sixty-five herbs grew from his grave, and were arranged according to their properties by his sister Airmed, but Diancecht again confused them, "so that no one knows their proper cures."<sup>213</sup> At the second battle of Mag-tured, Diancecht presided over a healing-well containing magic herbs. These and the power of spells caused the mortally wounded who were placed in it to recover. Hence it was called "the spring of health."<sup>214</sup> Diancecht, associated with a healing-well, may be cognate with Grannos. He is also referred to in the S. Gall MS., where his healing powers are extolled.

An early chief of the gods is Dagda, who, in the story of the battle of Mag-tured, is said to be so called because he promised to do more than all the other gods together. Hence they said, "It is thou art the *good hand*" (*dag-dae*). The *Cóir Anmann* explains *Dagda* as "fire of god" (*daig* and *déa*). The true derivation is from *dagos*, "good," and *deivos*, "god," though Dr. Stokes considers *Dagda* as connected with *dagh*, whence *daghda*, "cunning."<sup>215</sup> Dagda is also called Cera, a word perhaps derived from *kar* and connected with Lat. *cerus*, "creator" and other names of his are *Ruad-rofhessa*, "lord of great knowledge," and *Eochaid Ollathair*, "great father," "for a great father to the Tuatha Dé Danann was he."<sup>216</sup> He is also called "a beautiful god," and "the principal god of the pagans."<sup>217</sup> After the battle he divides the *brugs* or *síd* among the gods, but his son Oengus, having been omitted, by a stratagem succeeded in ousting his father from his *síd*, over which he now himself reigned<sup>218</sup>—possibly the survival of an old myth telling of a superseding of Dagda's cult by that of Oengus, a common enough occurrence in all religions. In another version, Dagda being dead, Bodb Dearg divides the *síd*, and Manannan makes the Tuatha Déa invisible and immortal. He also helps Oengus to drive out his foster-father Elomar from his *brug*, where Oengus now lives as a god.<sup>219</sup> The underground *brugs*

are the gods' land, in all respects resembling the oversea Elysium, and at once burial-places of the euhemerised gods and local forms of the divine land. Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup> regards Dagda as an atmospheric god; Dr. MacBain sees in him a sky-god. More probably he is an early Earth-god and a god of agriculture. He has power over corn and milk, and agrees to prevent the other gods from destroying these after their defeat by the Milesians—former beneficent gods being regarded as hurtful, a not uncommon result of the triumph of a new faith.<sup>220</sup> Dagda is called "the god of the earth" "because of the greatness of his power."<sup>221</sup> Mythical objects associated with him suggest plenty and fertility—his cauldron which satisfied all comers, his unfailing swine, one always living, the other ready for cooking, a vessel of ale, and three trees always laden with fruit. These were in his *síd*, where none ever tasted death;<sup>222</sup> hence his *síd* was a local Elysium, not a gloomy land of death, but the underworld in its primitive aspect as the place of gods of fertility. In some myths he appears with a huge club or fork, and M. D'Arbois suggests that he may thus be an equivalent of the Gaulish god with the mallet.<sup>223</sup> This is probable, since the Gaulish god may have been a form of Dispater, an Earth or under-Earth god of fertility.

If Dagda was a god of fertility, he may have been an equivalent of a god whose image was called *Cenn* or *Cromm Cruaich*, "Head or Crooked One of the Mound," or "Bloody Head or Crescent."<sup>224</sup> Vallancey, citing a text now lost, says that *Crom-eocha* was a name of Dagda, and that a motto at the sacrificial place at Tara read, "Let the altar ever blaze to Dagda."<sup>225</sup> These statements may support this identification. The cult of Cromm is preserved in some verses:

"He was their god,  
The withered Cromm with many mists...  
To him without glory  
They would kill their piteous wretched offspring,  
With much wailing and peril,  
To pour their blood around Cromm Cruaich.  
Milk and corn

They would ask from him speedily  
In return for a third of their healthy issue,  
Great was the horror and fear of him.  
To him noble Gaels would prostrate themselves."<sup>226</sup>

Elsewhere we learn that this sacrifice in return for the gifts of corn and milk from the god took place at Samhain, and that on one occasion the violent prostrations of the worshippers caused three-fourths of them to die. Again, "they beat their palms, they pounded their bodies ... they shed falling showers of tears."<sup>227</sup> These are reminiscences of orgiastic rites in which pain and pleasure melt into one. The god must have been a god of fertility; the blood of the victims was poured on the image, the flesh, as in analogous savage rites and folk-survivals, may have been buried in the fields to promote fertility. If so, the victims' flesh was instinct with the power of the divinity, and, though their number is obviously exaggerated, several victims may have taken the place of an earlier slain representative of the god. A mythic *Crom Dubh*, "Black Crom," whose festival occurs on the first Sunday in August, may be another form of Cromm Cruaich. In one story the name is transferred to S. Patrick's servant, who is asked by the fairies when they will go to Paradise. "Not till the day of judgment," is the answer, and for this they cease to help men in the processes of agriculture. But in a variant Manannan bids Crom ask this question, and the same result follows.<sup>228</sup> These tales thus enshrine the idea that Crom and the fairies were ancient gods of growth who ceased to help men when they deserted them for the Christian faith. If the sacrifice was offered at the August festival, or, as the texts suggest, at Samhain, after harvest, it must have been on account of the next year's crop, and the flesh may have been mingled with the seed corn.

Dagda may thus have been a god of growth and fertility. His wife or mistress was the river-goddess, Boand (the Boyne),<sup>229</sup> and the children ascribed to him were Oengus, Bodb Dearg, Danu, Brigit, and perhaps Ogma. The euhemerists made him die of Cethlenn's venom, long after the battle of Mag-tured in which he encountered her.<sup>230</sup> Irish mythology is

remarkably free from obscene and grotesque myths, but some of these cluster round Dagda. We hear of the Gargantuan meal provided for him in sport by the Fomorians, and of which he ate so much that "not easy was it for him to move and unseemly was his apparel," as well as his conduct with a Fomorian beauty. Another amour of his was with Morrigan, the place where it occurred being still known as "The Couple's Bed."<sup>231</sup> In another tale Dagda acts as cook to Conaire the great.<sup>232</sup>

The beautiful and fascinating Oengus is sometimes called *Mac Ind Oc*, "Son of the Young Ones," *i.e.* Dagda and Boand, or *In Mac Oc*, "The Young Son." This name, like the myth of his disinheriting his father, may point to his cult superseding that of Dagda. If so, he may then have been affiliated to the older god, as was frequently done in parallel cases, *e.g.* in Babylon. Oengus may thus have been the high god of some tribe who assumed supremacy, ousting the high god of another tribe, unless we suppose that Dagda was a pre-Celtic god with functions similar to those of Oengus, and that the Celts adopted his cult but gave that of Oengus a higher place. In one myth the supremacy of Oengus is seen. After the first battle of Mag-tured, Dagda is forced to become the slave of Bres, and is much annoyed by a lampooner who extorts the best pieces of his rations. Following the advice of Oengus, he not only causes the lampooner's death, but triumphs over the Fomorians.<sup>233</sup> On insufficient grounds, mainly because he was patron of Diarmaid, beloved of women, and because his kisses became birds which whispered love thoughts to youths and maidens, Oengus has been called the Eros of the Gaels. More probably he was primarily a supreme god of growth, who occasionally suffered eclipse during the time of death in nature, like Tammuz and Adonis, and this may explain his absence from Mag-tured. The beautiful story of his vision of a maiden with whom he fell violently in love contains too many *Märchen* formulæ to be of any mythological or religious value. His mother Boand caused search to be made for her, but without avail. At last she was discovered to be the daughter of a semi-divine lord of a *síd*, but only through the help of mortals was the secret of how she could be taken wrung from him. She was a swan-maiden, and on a certain day only would Oengus obtain her. Ultimately she

became his wife. The story is interesting because it shows how the gods occasionally required mortal aid.<sup>[234](#)</sup>

Equally influenced by *Märchen* formulæ is the story of Oengus and Etain. Etain and Fuamnach were wives of Mider, but Fuamnach was jealous of Etain, and transformed her into an insect. In this shape Oengus found her, and placed her in a glass *grianan* or bower filled with flowers, the perfume of which sustained her. He carried the *grianan* with him wherever he went, but Fuamnach raised a magic wind which blew Etain away to the roof of Etair, a noble of Ulster. She fell through a smoke-hole into a golden cup of wine, and was swallowed by Etair's wife, of whom she was reborn.<sup>[235](#)</sup> Professor Rhys resolves all this into a sun and dawn myth. Oengus is the sun, Etain the dawn, the *grianan* the expanse of the sky.<sup>[236](#)</sup> But the dawn does not grow stronger with the sun's influence, as Etain did under that of Oengus. At the sun's appearance the dawn begins

"to faint in the light of the sun she loves,  
To faint in his light and to die."

The whole story is built up on the well-known *Märchen* formulæ of the "True Bride" and the "Two Brothers," but accommodated to well-known mythic personages, and the *grianan* is the Celtic equivalent of various objects in stories of the "Cinderella" type, in which the heroine conceals herself, the object being bought by the hero and kept in his room.<sup>[237](#)</sup> Thus the tale reveals nothing of Etain's divine functions, but it illustrates the method of the "mythological" school in discovering sun-heroes and dawn-maidens in any incident, mythical or not.

Oengus appears in the Fionn cycle as the fosterer and protector of Diarmaid.<sup>[238](#)</sup> With Mider, Bodb, and Morrigan, he expels the Fomorians when they destroy the corn, fruit, and milk of the Tuatha Dé Danann.<sup>[239](#)</sup> This may point to his functions as a god of fertility.

Although Mider appears mainly as a king of the *síde* and ruler of the *brug* of Bri Léith, he is also connected with the Tuatha Déa.<sup>[240](#)</sup> Learning that Etain had been reborn and was now married to King Eochaid, he



recovered her from him, but lost her again when Eochaid attacked his *brug*. He was ultimately avenged in the series of tragic events which led to the death of Eochaid's descendant Conaire. Though his *síd* is located in Ireland, it has so much resemblance to Elysium that Mider must be regarded as one of its lords. Hence he appears as ruler of the Isle of Falga, *i.e.* the Isle of Man regarded as Elysium. Thence his daughter Bláthnat, his magical cows and cauldron, were stolen by Cúchulainn and Curoi, and his three cranes from Bri Léith by Aitherne<sup>241</sup>—perhaps distorted versions of the myths which told how various animals and gifts came from the god's land. Mider may be the Irish equivalent of a local Gaulish god, Medros, depicted on bas-reliefs with a cow or bull.<sup>242</sup>

The victory of the Tuatha Déa at the first battle of Mag-tured, in June, their victory followed, however, by the deaths of many of them at the second battle in November, may point to old myths dramatising the phenomena of nature, and connected with the ritual of summer and winter festivals. The powers of light and growth are in the ascendant in summer; they seem to die in winter. Christian euhemerists made use of these myths, but regarded the gods as warriors who were slain, not as those who die and revive again. At the second battle, Nuada loses his life; at the first, though his forces are victorious, his hand was cut off by the Fomorian Sreng, for even when victorious the gods must suffer. A silver hand was made for him by Diancecht, and hence he was called Nuada *Argetlám*, "of the silver hand." Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup> regards him as a Celtic Zeus, partly because he is king of the Tuatha Dé Danann, partly because he, like Zeus or Tyr, who lost tendons or a hand through the wiles of evil gods, is also maimed.<sup>243</sup> Similarly in the *Rig-Veda* the Aṣvins substitute a leg of iron for the leg of Vispala, cut off in battle, and the sun is called "golden-handed" because Savitri cut off his hand and the priests replaced it by one of gold. The myth of Nuada's hand may have arisen from primitive attempts at replacing lopped-off limbs, as well as from the fact that no Irish king must have any bodily defect, or possibly because an image of Nuada may have lacked a hand or possessed one of silver. Images were often maimed or given artificial limbs, and myths then arose to explain the custom.<sup>244</sup> Nuada

appears to be a god of life and growth, but he is not a sun-god. His Welsh equivalent is Llûd Llawereint, or "silver-handed," who delivers his people from various scourges. His daughter Creidylad is to be wedded to Gwythur, but is kidnapped by Gwyn. Arthur decides that they must fight for her yearly on 1st May until the day of judgment, when the victor would gain her hand.<sup>245</sup> Professor Rh^ys regards Creidylad as a Persephone, wedded alternately to light and dark divinities.<sup>246</sup> But the story may rather be explanatory of such ritual acts as are found in folk-survivals in the form of fights between summer and winter, in which a Queen of May figures, and intended to assist the conflict of the gods of growth with those of blight.<sup>247</sup> Creidylad is daughter of a probable god of growth, nor is it impossible that the story of the battle of Mag-tured is based on mythic explanations of such ritual combats.

The Brythons worshipped Nuada as Nodons in Romano-British times. The remains of his temple exist near the mouth of the Severn, and the god may have been equated with Mars, though certain symbols seem to connect him with the waters as a kind of Neptune.<sup>248</sup> An Irish mythic poet Nuada Necht may be the Nechtan who owned a magic well whence issued the Boyne, and was perhaps a water-god. If such a water-god was associated with Nuada, he and Nodons might be a Celtic Neptune.<sup>249</sup> But the relationship and functions of these various personages are obscure, nor is it certain that Nodons was equated with Neptune or that Nuada was a water-god. His name may be cognate with words meaning "growth," "possession," "harvest," and this supports the view taken here of his functions.<sup>250</sup> The Welsh Nudd Hael, or "the Generous," who possessed a herd of 21,000 milch kine, may be a memory of this god, and it is possible that, as a god of growth, Nuada had human incarnations called by his name.<sup>251</sup>

Ler, whose name means "sea," and who was a god of the sea, is father of Manannan as well as of the personages of the beautiful story called *The Children of Lir*, from which we learn practically all that is known of him. He resented not being made ruler of the Tuatha Déa, but was later reconciled when the daughter of Bodb Dearg was given to him as his wife.



On her death, he married her sister, who transformed her step-children into swans.<sup>252</sup> Ler is the equivalent of the Brythonic Llyr, later immortalised by Shakespeare as King Lear.

The greatness of Manannan mac Lir, "son of the sea," is proved by the fact that he appears in many of the heroic tales, and is still remembered in tradition and folk-tale. He is a sea-god who has become more prominent than the older god of the sea, and though not a supreme god, he must have had a far-spreading cult. With Bodb Dearg he was elected king of the Tuatha Dé Danann. He made the gods invisible and immortal, gave them magical food, and assisted Oengus in driving out Elemar from his *síd*. Later tradition spoke of four Manannans, probably local forms of the god, as is suggested by the fact that the true name of one of them is said to be Orbsen, son of Allot. Another, the son of Ler, is described as a renowned trader who dwelt in the Isle of Man, the best of pilots, weather-wise, and able to transform himself as he pleased. The *Cóir Anmann* adds that the Britons and the men of Erin deemed him god of the sea.<sup>253</sup> That position is plainly seen in many tales, e.g. in the magnificent passage of *The Voyage of Bran*, where he suddenly sweeps into sight, riding in a chariot across the waves from the Land of Promise; or in the tale of *Cúchulainn's Sickness*, where his wife Fand sees him, "the horseman of the crested sea," coming across the waves. In the *Agallamh na Senorach* he appears as a cavalier breasting the waves. "For the space of nine waves he would be submerged in the sea, but would rise on the crest of the tenth without wetting chest or breast."<sup>254</sup> In one archaic tale he is identified with a great sea wave which swept away Tuag, while the waves are sometimes called "the son of Lir's horses"—a name still current in Ireland, or, again, "the locks of Manannan's wife."<sup>255</sup> His position as god of the sea may have given rise to the belief that he was ruler of the oversea Elysium, and, later, of the other-world as a magical domain coterminous with this earth. He is still remembered in the Isle of Man, which may owe its name to him, and which, like many another island, was regarded by the Goidels as the island Elysium under its name of Isle of Falga. He is also the Manawyddan of Welsh story.

Manannan appears in the Cúchulainn and Fionn cycles, usually as a ruler of the Other-world. His wife Fand was Cúchulainn's mistress, Diarmaid was his pupil in fairyland, and Cormac was his guest there. Even in Christian times surviving pagan beliefs caused legend to be busy with his name. King Fiachna was fighting the Scots and in great danger, when a stranger appeared to his wife and announced that he would save her husband's life if she would consent to abandon herself to him. She reluctantly agreed, and the child of the *amour* was the seventh-century King Mongan, of whom the annalist says, "every one knows that his real father was Manannan."<sup>256</sup> Mongan was also believed to be a rebirth of Fionn. Manannan is still remembered in folk-tradition, and in the Isle of Man, where his grave is to be seen, some of his ritual survived until lately, bundles of rushes being placed for him on midsummer eve on two hills.<sup>257</sup> Barintus, who steers Arthur to the fortunate isles, and S. Barri, who crossed the sea on horseback, may have been legendary forms of a local sea-god akin to Manannan, or of Manannan himself.<sup>258</sup> His steed was Enbarr, "water foam *or* hair," and Manannan was "the horseman of the manéd sea." "Barintus," perhaps connected with *barr find*, "white-topped," would thus be a surname of the god who rode on Enbarr, the foaming wave, or who was himself the wave, while his mythic sea-riding was transferred to the legend of S. Barri, if such a person ever existed.

Various magical possessions were ascribed to Manannan—his armour and sword, the one making the wearer invulnerable, the other terrifying all who beheld it; his horse and canoe; his swine, which came to life again when killed; his magic cloak; his cup which broke when a lie was spoken; his tablecloth, which, when waved, produced food. Many of these are found everywhere in *Märchen*, and there is nothing peculiarly Celtic in them. We need not, therefore, with the mythologists, see in his armour the vapoury clouds or in his sword lightning or the sun's rays. But their magical nature as well as the fact that so much wizardry is attributed to Manannan, points to a copious mythology clustering round the god, now for ever lost.

The parentage of Lug is differently stated, but that account which makes him son of Cian and of Ethne, daughter of Balor, is best attested.<sup>259</sup> Folk-

tradition still recalls the relation of Lug and Balor. Balor, a robber living in Tory Island, had a daughter whose son was to kill her father. He therefore shut her up in an inaccessible place, but in revenge for Balor's stealing MacIneely's cow, the latter gained access to her, with the result that Ethne bore three sons, whom Balor cast into the sea. One of them, Lug, was recovered by MacIneely and fostered by his brother Gavida. Balor now slew MacIneely, but was himself slain by Lug, who pierced his single eye with a red-hot iron.<sup>260</sup> In another version, Kian takes MacIneely's place and is aided by Manannan, in accordance with older legends.<sup>261</sup> But Lug's birth-story has been influenced in these tales by the *Märchen* formula of the girl hidden away because it has been foretold that she will have a son who will slay her father.

Lug is associated with Manannan, from whose land he comes to assist the Tuatha Déa against the Fomorians. His appearance was that of the sun, and by this brilliant warrior's prowess the hosts were utterly defeated.<sup>262</sup> This version, found in *The Children of Tuirenn*, differs from the account in the story of Mag-tured. Here Lug arrives at the gates of Tara and offers his services as a craftsman. Each offer is refused, until he proclaims himself "the man of each and every art," or *samildánach*, "possessing many arts." Nuada resigns his throne to him for thirteen days, and Lug passes in review the various craftsmen (*i.e.* the gods), and though they try to prevent such a marvellous person risking himself in fight, he escapes, heads the warriors, and sings his war-song. Balor, the evil-eyed, he slays with a sling-stone, and his death decided the day against the Fomorians. In this account Lug *samildánach* is a patron of the divine patrons of crafts; in other words, he is superior to a whole group of gods. He was also inventor of draughts, ball-play, and horsemanship. But, as M. D'Arbois shows, *samildánach* is the equivalent of "inventor of all arts," applied by Cæsar to the Gallo-Roman Mercury, who is thus an equivalent of Lug.<sup>263</sup> This is attested on other grounds. As Lug's name appears in Irish Louth (*Lug-magh*) and in British Lugu-vallum, near Hadrian's Wall, so in Gaul the names Lugudunum (Lyons), Lugudiacus, and Lugselva ("devoted to Lugus") show that a god Lugus was worshipped there. A Gaulish feast of Lugus in August—the

month of Lug's festival in Ireland—was perhaps superseded by one in honour of Augustus. No dedication to Lugus has yet been found, but images of and inscriptions to Mercury abound at Lugudunum Convenarum.<sup>264</sup> As there were three Brigits, so there may have been several forms of Lugus, and two dedications to the *Lugoves* have been found in Spain and Switzerland, one of them inscribed by the shoemakers of Uxama.<sup>265</sup> Thus the *Lugoves* may have been multiplied forms of Lugus or *Lugovos*, "a hero," the meaning given to "Lug" by O'Davoren.<sup>266</sup> Shoe-making was not one of the arts professed by Lug, but Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys recalls the fact that the Welsh Llew, whom he equates with Lug, disguised himself as a shoemaker.<sup>267</sup> Lugus, besides being a mighty hero, was a great Celtic culture-god, superior to all other culture divinities.

The euhemerists assigned a definite date to Lug's death, but side by side with this the memory of his divinity prevailed, and he appears as the father and helper of Cúchulainn, who was possibly a rebirth of the god.<sup>268</sup> His high position appears in the fact that the Gaulish assembly at Lugudunum was held in his honour, like the festival of Lughnasad in Ireland. Craftsmen brought their wares to sell at this festival of the god of crafts, while it may also have been a harvest festival.<sup>269</sup> Whether it was a strictly solar feast is doubtful, though Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys and others insist that Lug is a sun-god. The name of the Welsh Llew, "light," is equated with Lug, and the same meaning assigned to the latter.<sup>270</sup> This equation has been contested and is doubtful, Lugus probably meaning "hero."<sup>271</sup> Still the sun-like traits ascribed to Lug before Mag-tured suggest that he was a sun-god, and solar gods elsewhere, e.g. the Polynesian Maui, are culture-gods as well. But it should be remembered that Lug is not associated with the true solar festivals of Beltane and Midsummer.

While our knowledge of the Tuatha Dé Danann is based upon a series of mythic tales and other records, that of the gods of the continental Celts, apart from a few notices in classical authors and elsewhere, comes from inscriptions. But as far as can be judged, though the names of the two groups seldom coincide, their functions must have been much alike, and

their origins certainly the same. The Tuatha Dé Danann were nature divinities of growth, light, agriculture—their symbols and possessions suggesting fertility, *e.g.* the cauldron. They were divinities of culture and crafts, and of war. There must have been many other gods in Ireland than those described here, while some of those may not have been worshipped all over Ireland. Generally speaking, there were many local gods in Gaul with similar functions but different names, and this may have been true of Ireland. Perhaps the different names given to Dagda, Manannan, and others were simply names of similar local gods, one of whom became prominent, and attracted to himself the names of the others. So, too, the identity of Danu and Brigit might be explained, or the fact that there were three Brigit. We read also in the texts of the god of Connaught, or of Ulster, and these were apparently regional divinities, or of "the god of Druidism"—perhaps a god worshipped specially by Druids.<sup>272</sup> The remote origin of some of these divinities may be sought in the primitive cult of the Earth personified as a fertile being, and in that of vegetation and corn-spirits, and the vague spirits of nature in all its aspects. Some of these still continued to be worshipped when the greater gods had been evolved. Though animal worship was not lacking in Ireland, divinities who are anthropomorphic forms of earlier animal-gods are less in evidence than on the Continent. The divinities of culture, crafts, and war, and of departments of nature, must have slowly assumed the definite personality assigned them in Irish religion. But, doubtless, they already possessed that before the Goidels reached Ireland. Strictly speaking, the underground domain assigned later to the Tuatha Dé Danann belongs only to such of them as were associated with fertility. But in course of time most of the group, as underground dwellers, were connected with growth and increase. These could be blighted by their enemies, or they themselves could withhold them when their worshippers offended them.<sup>273</sup>

Irish mythology points to the early pre-eminence of goddesses. As agriculture and many of the arts were first in the hands of women, goddesses of fertility and culture preceded gods, and still held their place when gods were evolved. Even war-goddesses are prominent in Ireland.

Celtic gods and heroes are often called after their mothers, not their fathers, and women loom largely in the tales of Irish colonisation, while in many legends they play a most important part. Goddesses give their name to divine groups, and, even where gods are prominent, their actions are free, their personalities still clearly defined. The supremacy of the divine women of Irish tradition is once more seen in the fact that they themselves woo and win heroes; while their capacity for love, their passion, their eternal youthfulness and beauty are suggestive of their early character as goddesses of ever-springing fertility.<sup>274</sup>

This supremacy of goddesses is explained by Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup> as non-Celtic, as borrowed by the Celts from the aborigines.<sup>275</sup> But it is too deeply impressed on the fabric of Celtic tradition to be other than native, and we have no reason to suppose that the Celts had not passed through a stage in which such a state of things was normal. Their innate conservatism caused them to preserve it more than other races who had long outgrown such a state of things.

<sup>147.</sup> *HL* 89; Stokes, *RC* xii. 129. D'Arbois, ii. 125, explains it as "Folk of the god whose mother is called Danu."

<sup>148.</sup> *RC* xii. 77. The usual Irish word for "god" is *dia*; other names are *Fiadu*, *Art*, *Dess*.

<sup>149.</sup> See Joyce, *SH* i. 252, 262; *PN* i. 183.

<sup>150.</sup> *LL* 245*b*.

<sup>151.</sup> *LL* 11.

<sup>152.</sup> *LL* 127. The mounds were the sepulchres of the euhemerised gods.

<sup>153.</sup> *Book of Fermoy*, fifteenth century.

<sup>154.</sup> *LL* 11*b*.

<sup>155.</sup> *IT* i. 14, 774; Stokes, *TL* i. 99, 314, 319. *Síd* is a fairy hill, the hill itself or the dwelling within it. Hence those who dwell in it are *Aes* or *Fir síde*, "men of the mound," or *síde*, fairy folk. The primitive form is probably *sédos*, from *séd*, "abode" or "seat"; cf. Greek (edos) "a temple." Thurneysen suggests a connection with a word equivalent to Lat. *sidus*, "constellation," or "dwelling of the gods."

<sup>156.</sup> Joyce, *SH* i. 252; O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 505.

<sup>157.</sup> "Vision of Oengus," *RC* iii. 344; *IT* i. 197 f.



- [158.](#) Windisch, *Ir. Gram.* 118; O'Curry, *MC* ii. 71; see p. 363, *infra*.
- [159.](#) Windisch, *Ir. Gram.* 118, § 6; *IT* iii. 407; *RC* xvi. 139.
- [160.](#) Shore, *JAI* xx. 9.
- [161.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 203 f. *Pennocrucium* occurs in the *Itinerary* of Antoninus.
- [162.](#) Keating, 434.
- [163.](#) Joyce, *SH* i. 252.
- [164.](#) See p. 228. In Scandinavia the dead were called elves, and lived feasting in their barrows or in hills. These became the seat of ancestral cults. The word "elf" also means any divine spirit, later a fairy. "Elf" and *síde* may thus, like the "elf-howe" and the *síd* or mound, have a parallel history. See Vigfusson-Powell, *Corpus Poet. Boreale*, i. 413 f.
- [165.](#) Tuan MacCairill (*LU* 166) calls the Tuatha Déa, "dée ocus andée," and gives the meaning as "poets and husbandmen." This phrase, with the same meaning, is used in "Cóir Anmann" (*IT* iii. 355), but there we find that it occurred in a pagan formula of blessing—"The blessing of gods and not-gods be on thee." But the writer goes on to say—"These were their gods, the magicians, and their non-gods, the husbandmen." This may refer to the position of priest-kings and magicians as gods. Rh<sup>^</sup>ys compares Sanskrit *deva* and *adeva* (*HL* 581). Cf. the phrase in a Welsh poem (Skene, i. 313), "Teulu Oeth et Anoeth," translated by Rh<sup>^</sup>ys as "Household of Power and Not-Power" (*CFL* ii. 620), but the meaning is obscure. See Loth, i. 197.
- [166.](#) *LL* 10b.
- [167.](#) Cormac, 4. Stokes (*US* 12) derives Anu from (*p*)*an*, "to nourish"; cf. Lat. *panis*.
- [168.](#) *Leicester County Folk-lore*, 4. The *Cóir Anmann* says that Anu was worshipped as a goddess of plenty (*IT* iii. 289).
- [169.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *Trans. 3rd Inter. Cong. Hist. of Rel.* ii. 213. See Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* 251 ff., and p. 275, *infra*.
- [170.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *ibid.* ii. 213. He finds her name in the place-name *Bononia* and its derivatives.
- [171.](#) Cormac, 23.
- [172.](#) Cæsar, vi. 17; Holder, *s.v.*; Stokes, *TIG* 33.
- [173.](#) Girald. *Cambr. Top. Hib.* ii. 34 f. Vengeance followed upon rash intrusion. For the breath tabu see Frazer, *Early Hist. of the Kingship*, 224.
- [174.](#) Joyce, *SH* i. 335.
- [175.](#) P. 41, *supra*.
- [176.](#) Martin, 119; Campbell, *Witchcraft*, 248.
- [177.](#) Frazer, *op. cit.* 225.
- [178.](#) Joyce, *PN* i. 195; O'Grady, ii. 198; Wood-Martin, i. 366; see p. 42, *supra*.
- [179.](#) Fitzgerald, *RC* iv. 190. Aine has no connection with Anu, nor is she a moon-goddess, as is sometimes supposed.

- [180.](#) *RC* iv. 189.
- [181.](#) Keating, 318; *IT* iii. 305; *RC* xiii. 435.
- [182.](#) O'Grady, ii. 197.
- [183.](#) *RC* xii. 109, xxii. 295; Cormac, 87; Stokes, *TIG* xxxiii.
- [184.](#) Holder, i. 341; *CIL* vii. 1292; Cæsar, ii. 23.
- [185.](#) *LL* 11*b*; Cormac, s.v. *Neit*; *RC* iv. 36; *Arch. Rev.* i. 231; Holder, ii. 714, 738.
- [186.](#) Stokes, *TIG*, *LL* 11*a*.
- [187.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 43; Stokes, *RC* xii. 128.
- [188.](#) *RC* xii. 91, 110.
- [189.](#) See p. 131.
- [190.](#) Petrie, *Tara*, 147; Stokes, *US* 175; Meyer, *Cath Finntrága*, Oxford, 1885, 76 f.; *RC* xvi. 56, 163, xxi. 396.
- [191.](#) *CIL* vii. 507; Stokes, *US* 211.
- [192.](#) *RC* i. 41, xii. 84.
- [193.](#) *RC* xxi. 157, 315; Miss Hull, 247. A *baobh* (a common Gaelic name for "witch") appears to Oscar and prophesies his death in a Fionn ballad (Campbell, *The Fians*, 33). In Brittany the "night-washers," once water-fairies, are now regarded as *revenants* (Le Braz, i. 52).
- [194.](#) Joyce, *SH* i. 261; Miss Hull, 186; Meyer, *Cath Finntraga*, 6, 13; *IT* i. 131, 871.
- [195.](#) *LL* 10*a*.
- [196.](#) *LL* 10*a*, 30*b*, 187*c*.
- [197.](#) *RC* xxvi. 13; *LL* 187*c*.
- [198.](#) Cf. the personification of the three strains of Dagda's harp (Leahy, ii. 205).
- [199.](#) See p. 223, *infra*.
- [200.](#) D'Arbois, ii. 372.
- [201.](#) *RC* xii. 77, 83.
- [202.](#) *LL* 11; *Atlantis*, London, 1858-70, iv. 159.
- [203.](#) O'Donovan, *Grammar*, Dublin, 1845, xlvii.
- [204.](#) *RC* xii. 77.
- [205.](#) Lucian, *Herakles*.
- [206.](#) *RC* xii. 89. The name is found in Gaulish Gobannicnos, and in Welsh Abergavenny.
- [207.](#) *IT* i. 56; Zimmer, *Glossæ Hibernicæ*, 1881, 270.
- [208.](#) *Atlantis*, 1860, iii. 389.
- [209.](#) *RC* xii. 89.



[210.](#) *LL* 11a.

[211.](#) *RC* xii. 93.

[212.](#) Connac, 56, and *Cóir Anmann* (*IT* iii. 357) divide the name as *día-na-cecht* and explain it as "god of the powers."

[213.](#) *RC* xii. 67. For similar stories of plants springing from graves, see my *Childhood of Fiction*, 115.

[214.](#) *RC* xii, 89, 95.

[215.](#) *RC* vi. 369; Cormac, 23.

[216.](#) Cormac, 47, 144; *IT* iii. 355, 357.

[217.](#) *IT* iii. 355; D'Arbois, i. 202.

[218.](#) *LL* 246a.

[219.](#) *Irish MSS. Series*, i. 46; D'Arbois, ii. 276. In a MS. edited by Dr. Stirn, Oengus was Dagda's son by Elemar's wife, the amour taking place in her husband's absence. This incident is a parallel to the birth-stories of Mongan and Arthur, and has also the Fatherless Child theme, since Oengus goes in tears to Mider because he has been taunted with having no father or mother. In the same MS. it is the Dagda who instructs Oengus how to obtain Elemar's *síd*. See *RC* xxvii. 332, xxviii. 330.

[220.](#) *LL* 245b.

[221.](#) *IT* iii. 355.

[222.](#) O'Donovan, *Battle of Mag-Rath*, Dublin, 1842, 50; *LL* 246a.

[223.](#) D'Arbois, v. 427, 448.

[224.](#) The former is Rh<sup>ys</sup>'s interpretation (*HL* 201) connecting *Cruaich* with *criach*, "a heap"; the latter is that of D'Arbois (ii. 106), deriving *Cruaich* from *cru*, "blood." The idea of the image being bent or crooked may have been due to the fact that it long stood ready to topple over, as a result of S. Patrick's miracle. See p. 286, *infra*.

[225.](#) Vallancey, in *Coll. de Rebus Hib.* 1786, iv. 495.

[226.](#) *LL* 213b. D'Arbois thinks Cromm was a Fomorian, the equivalent of Taranis (ii. 62). But he is worshipped by Gaels. *Crin*, "withered," probably refers to the idol's position after S. Patrick's miracle, no longer upright but bent like an old man. Dr. Hyde, *Lit. Hist. of Ireland*, 87, with exaggerated patriotism, thinks the sacrificial details are copied by a Christian scribe from the Old Testament, and are no part of the old ritual.

[227.](#) *RC* xvi. 35, 163.

[228.](#) Fitzgerald, *RL* iv. 175.

[229.](#) *RC* xxvi. 19.

[230.](#) *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.M. 3450.

[231.](#) *RC* xii. 83, 85; Hyde, *op. cit.* 288.

[232.](#) *LU* 94.

[233.](#) *RC* xii. 65. Elsewhere three supreme "ignorances" are ascribed to Oengus (*RL* xxvi. 31).

[234.](#) *RC* iii. 342.

[235.](#) *LL* 11*c*; *LU* 129; *IT* i. 130. Cf. the glass house, placed between sky and moon, to which Tristan conducts the queen. Bedier, *Tristan et Iseut*, 252. In a fragmentary version of the story Oengus is Etain's wooer, but Mider is preferred by her father, and marries her. In the latter half of the story, Oengus does not appear (see p. 363, *infra*). Mr. Nutt (*RC* xxvii. 339) suggests that Oengus, not Mider, was the real hero of the story, but that its Christian redactors gave Mider his place in the second part. The fragments are edited by Stirn (*ZCP* vol. v.).

[236.](#) *HL* 146.

[237.](#) See my *Childhood of Fiction*, 114, 153. The tale has some unique features, as it alone among Western *Märchen* and saga variants of the "True Bride" describes the malicious woman as the wife of Mider. In other words, the story implies polygamy, rarely found in European folk-tales.

[238.](#) O'Grady, *TOS* iii.

[239.](#) *RC* i. 41.

[240.](#) O'Curry, *MC* i. 71.

[241.](#) *LL* 117*a*. See p. 381, *infra*.

[242.](#) Cumont, *RC* xxvi. 47; D'Arbois, *RC* xxvii. 127, notes the difficulty of explaining the change of *e* to *i* in the names.

[243.](#) *HL* 121.

[244.](#) See Crooke, *Folk-Lore*, viii. 341. Cf. Herod, ii. 131.

[245.](#) Loth, i. 269.

[246.](#) *HL* 563.

[247.](#) Train, *Isle of Man*, Douglas, 1845, ii. 118; Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* ii. ch. 24; Frazer, *GB*<sup>2</sup> ii. 99 f.

[248.](#) Bathurst, *Roman Antiquities at Lydney Park*, 1879; Holder, s.v. "Nodons."

[249.](#) See Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 122; Cook, *Folk-Lore*, xvii. 30.

[250.](#) Stokes, *US* 194-195; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL*, 128, *IT* i. 712.

[251.](#) Loth, ii. 235, 296. See p. 160, *infra*.

[252.](#) Joyce, *OCR*.

[253.](#) For these four Manannans see Cormac 114, *RC* xxiv. 270, *IT* iii. 357.

[254.](#) O'Grady, ii.

[255.](#) Bodley *Dindsenchas*, No. 10, *RC* xii. 105; Joyce, *SH* i. 259; *Otia Merseiana*, ii. "Song of the Sea."

[256.](#) *LU* 133.

[257.](#) Moore, 6.

[258.](#) Geoffrey, *Vita Merlini*, 37; Rees, 435. Other saintly legends are derived from myths, e.g. that of S. Barri in his boat meeting S. Scuithne walking on the sea. Scuithne maintains he is walking on a field, and plucks a flower to prove it, while Barri confutes him by pulling a salmon out of the sea. This resembles an episode in the meeting of Bran and Manannan (Stokes, *Félire*, xxxix.; Nutt-Meyer, i. 39). Saints are often said to assist men just as the gods did. Columcille and Brigit appeared over the hosts of Erin assisting and encouraging them (*RC* xxiv. 40).

[259.](#) *RC* xii. 59.

[260.](#) *Folk-Lore Journal*, v. 66; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 314.

[261.](#) Larminie, "Kian, son of Kontje."

[262.](#) Joyce, *OCR* 37.

[263.](#) D'Arbois, vi. 116, *Les Celtes*, 39, *RC* xii. 75, 101, 127, xvi. 77. Is the defaced inscription at Geitershof, *Deo M ... Sam ...* (Holder, ii. 1335), a dedication to Mercury Samildánach? An echo of Lug's story is found in the Life of S. Herve, who found a devil in his monastery in the form of a man who said he was a good carpenter, mason, locksmith, etc., but who could not make the sign of the cross. Albert le Grand, *Saints de la Bretagne*, 49, *RC* vii. 231.

[264.](#) Holder, s.v.; D'Arbois, *Les Celtes*, 44, *RC* vii. 400.

[265.](#) Holder, s.v. "Lugus."

[266.](#) Stokes, *TIG* 103. Gaidoz contests the identification of the Lugoves and of Lug with Mercury, and to him the Lugoves are grouped divinities like the *Matres* (*RC* vi. 489).

[267.](#) *HL* 425.

[268.](#) See p.349, *infra*.

[269.](#) See p. 272, *infra*.

[270.](#) *HL* 409.

[271.](#) See Loth, *RC* x. 490.

[272.](#) Leahy, i. 138, ii. 50, 52, *LU* 124*b*.

[273.](#) *LL* 215*a*; see p. 78, *supra*.

[274.](#) See, further, p. 385, *infra*.

[275.](#) *The Welsh People*, 61. Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys admits that the theory of borrowing "cannot easily be proved."

# The Gods of the Brythons

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Our knowledge of the gods of the Brythons, *i.e.* as far as Wales is concerned, is derived, apart from inscriptions, from the *Mabinogion*, which, though found in a fourteenth century MS., was composed much earlier, and contains elements from a remote past. Besides this, the *Triads*, probably of twelfth-century origin, the *Taliesin*, and other poems, though obscure and artificial, the work of many a "confused bard drivelling" (to cite the words of one of them), preserve echoes of the old mythology.<sup>276</sup> Some of the gods may lurk behind the personages of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Britonum* and of the Arthurian cycle, though here great caution is required. The divinities have become heroes and heroines, kings and princesses, and if some of the episodes are based on ancient myths, they are treated in a romantic spirit. Other episodes are mere *Märchen* formulæ. Like the wreckage of some rich galleon, the *débris* of the old mythology has been used to construct a new fabric, and the old divinities have even less of the god-like traits of the personages of the Irish texts.

Some of the personages bear similar names to the Irish divinities, and in some cases there is a certain similarity of incidents to those of the Irish tales.<sup>277</sup> Are, then, the gods dimly revealed in Welsh literature as much Goidelic as Brythonic? Analysing the incidents of the *Mabinogion*, Professor Anwyl has shown that they have an entirely local character, and are mainly associated with the districts of Dyfed and Gwent, of Anglesey, and of Gwynedd, of which Pryderi, Branwen, and Gwydion are respectively the heroic characters.<sup>278</sup> These are the districts where a strong Goidelic element prevailed, whether these Goidels were the original inhabitants of Britain, driven there by Brythons,<sup>279</sup> or tribes who had settled there from Ireland,<sup>280</sup> or perhaps a mixture of both. In any case they had been conquered by Brythons and had become Brythonic in speech from the fifth century onwards. On account of this Goidelic element, it has been claimed that the personages of the *Mabinogion* are purely Goidelic. But examination

proves that only a few are directly parallel in name with Irish divinities, and while here there are fundamental likenesses, the *incidents* with Irish parallels may be due to mere superficial borrowings, to that interchange of *Märchen* and mythical *données* which has everywhere occurred. Many incidents have no Irish parallels, and most of the characters are entirely different in name from Irish divinities. Hence any theory which would account for the likenesses, must also account for the differences, and must explain why, if the *Mabinogion* is due to Irish Goidels, there should have been few or no borrowings in Welsh literature from the popular Cúchulainn and Ossianic sagas,<sup>[281](#)</sup> and why, at a time when Brythonic elements were uppermost, such care should have been taken to preserve Goidelic myths. If the tales emanated from native Welsh Goidels, the explanation might be that they, the kindred of the Irish Goidels, must have had a certain community with them in divine names and myths, while others of their gods, more local in character, would differ in name. Or if they are Brythonic, the likenesses might be accounted for by an early community in myth and cult among the common ancestors of Brythons and Goidels.<sup>[282](#)</sup> But as the date of the composition of the *Mabinogion* is comparatively late, at a time when Brythons had overrun these Goidelic districts, more probably the tales contain a mingling of Goidelic (Irish or Welsh) and Brythonic divinities, though some of these may be survivals of the common Celtic heritage.<sup>[283](#)</sup> Celtic divinities were mainly of a local, tribal character. Hence some would be local Goidelic divinities, others, classed with these, local Brythonic divinities. This would explain the absence of divinities and heroes of other local Brythonic groups, *e.g.* Arthur, from the *Mabinogion*. But with the growing importance of these, they attracted to their legend the folk of the *Mabinogion* and other tales. These are associated with Arthur in *Kulhwych*, and the Dôn group mingles with that of Taliesin in the *Taliesin* poems.<sup>[284](#)</sup> Hence Welsh literature, as far as concerns the old religion, may be regarded as including both local Goidelic and Brythonic divinities, of whom the more purely Brythonic are Arthur, Gwynn, Taliesin, etc.<sup>[285](#)</sup> They are regarded as kings and queens, or as fairies, or they have magical powers. They are mortal and die, and the place of their burial is pointed out, or

existing tumuli are associated with them, All this is parallel to the history of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and shows how the same process of degradation had been at work in Wales as in Ireland.

The story of the Llyr group is told in the *Mabinogion* of Branwen and of Manawyddan. They are associated with the Pwyll group, and apparently opposed to that of Dôn. Branwen is married to Matholwch, king of Ireland, but is ill-treated by him on account of the insults of the mischievous Evnissyen, in spite of the fact that Bran had atoned for the insult by many gifts, including that of a cauldron of regeneration. Now he crosses with an army to Ireland, where Evnissyen throws Branwen's child, to whom the kingdom is given, on the fire. A fight ensues; the dead Irish warriors are resuscitated in the cauldron, but Evnissyen, at the cost of his life, destroys it. Bran is slain, and by his directions his head is cut off and carried first to Harlech, then to Gwales, where it will entertain its bearers for eighty years. At the end of that time it is to be taken to London and buried. Branwen, departing with the bearers, dies of a broken heart at Anglesey, and meanwhile Caswallyn, son of Beli, seizes the kingdom.<sup>286</sup> Two of the bearers of the head are Manawyddan and Pryderi, whose fortunes we follow in the *Mabinogi* of the former. Pryderi gives his mother Rhiannon to Manawyddan as his wife, along with some land which by magic art is made barren. After following different crafts, they are led by a boar to a strange castle, where Rhiannon and Pryderi disappear along with the building. Manawyddan, with Pryderi's wife Kieva, set out as shoemakers, but are forced to abandon this craft on account of the envy of the craftsmen. Finally, we learn how Manawyddan overcame the enchanter Llwyd, who, because of an insult offered by Pryderi's father to his friend Gwawl, had made Rhiannon and Pryderi disappear. They are now restored, and Llwyd seeks no further revenge.

The story of Branwen is similar to a tale of which there are variants in Teutonic and Scandinavian sagas, but the resemblance is closer to the latter.<sup>287</sup> Possibly a similar story with their respective divinities or heroes for its characters existed among Celts, Teutons, and Norsemen, but more likely it was borrowed from Norsemen who occupied both sides of the Irish

Sea in the ninth and tenth century, and then naturalised by furnishing it with Celtic characters. But into this framework many native elements were set, and we may therefore scrutinise the story for Celtic mythical elements utilised by its redactor, who probably did not strip its Celtic personages of their earlier divine attributes. In the two *Mabinogi* these personages are Llyr, his sons Bran and Manawyddan, his daughter Branwen, their half-brothers Nissyen and Evnissyen, sons of Llyr's wife Penardim, daughter of Beli, by a previous marriage with Eurosswyd.

Llyr is the equivalent of the Irish Ler, the sea-god, but two other Llyrs, probably duplicates of himself, are known to Welsh story—Llyr Marini, and the Llyr, father of Cordelia, of the chroniclers.<sup>288</sup> He is constantly confused with Lludd Llawereint, e.g. both are described as one of three notable prisoners of Britain, and both are called fathers of Cordelia or Creiddylad.<sup>289</sup> Perhaps the two were once identical, for Manannan is sometimes called son of Alloid (= Lludd), in Irish texts, as well as son of Ler.<sup>290</sup> But the confusion may be accidental, nor is it certain that Nodons or Lludd was a sea-god. Llyr's prison was that of Eurosswyd,<sup>291</sup> whose wife he may have abducted and hence suffered imprisonment. In the *Black Book of Caermarthen* Bran is called son of Y Werydd or "Ocean," according to M. Loth's interpretation of the name, which would thus point to Llyr's position as a sea-god. But this is contested by Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys who makes Ywerit wife of Llyr, the name being in his view a form of the Welsh word for Ireland. In Geoffrey and the chroniclers Llyr becomes a king of Britain whose history and that of his daughters was immortalised by Shakespeare. Geoffrey also refers to Llyr's burial in a vault built in honour of Janus.<sup>292</sup> On this Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys builds a theory that Llyr was a form of the Celtic Dis with two faces and ruler of a world of darkness.<sup>293</sup> But there is no evidence that the Celtic Dispatēr was lord of a gloomy underworld, and it is best to regard Llyr as a sea-divinity.

Manawyddan is not god-like in these tales in the sense in which the majestic Manannan of Irish story is, though elsewhere we learn that "deep was his counsel."<sup>294</sup> Though not a magician, he baffles one of the great



wizards of Welsh story, and he is also a master craftsman, who instructs Pryderi in the arts of shoe-making, shield-making, and saddlery. In this he is akin to Manannan, the teacher of Diarmaid. Incidents of his career are reflected in the *Triads*, and his union with Rhiannon may point to an old myth in which they were from the first a divine pair, parents of Pryderi. This would give point to his deliverance of Pryderi and Rhiannon from the hostile magician.<sup>295</sup> Rhiannon resembles the Irish Elysium goddesses, and Manawyddan, like Manannan, is lord of Elysium in a *Taliesin* poem.<sup>296</sup> He is a craftsman and follows agriculture, perhaps a reminiscence of the old belief that fertility and culture come from the god's land. Manawyddan, like other divinities, was drawn into the Arthurian cycle, and is one of those who capture the famous boar, the *Twrch Trwyth*.<sup>297</sup>

Bran, or Bendigeit Vran ("Bran the Blessed"), probably an old pagan title which appropriately enough denotes one who figured later in Christian hagiology, is so huge that no house or ship can hold him. Hence he wades over to Ireland, and as he draws near is thought to be a mountain. This may be an archaic method of expressing his divinity—a gigantic non-natural man like some of the Tuatha Déa and Ossianic heroes. But Bran also appears as the *Urdawl Ben*, or "Noble Head," which makes time pass to its bearers like a dream, and when buried protects the land from invasion. Both as a giant squatting on a rock and as a head, Bran is equated by Professor Rhys with Cernunnos, the squatting god, represented also as a head, and also with the Welsh Urien whose attribute was a raven, the supposed meaning of Bran's name.<sup>298</sup> He further equates him with Uthr Ben, "Wonderful Head," the superior bard, harper and piper of a *Taliesin* poem.<sup>299</sup> Urien, Bran, and Uthr are three forms of a god worshipped by bards, and a "dark" divinity, whose wading over to Ireland signifies crossing to Hades, of which he, like Yama, who first crossed the rapid waters to the land of death, is the ruler.<sup>300</sup> But Bran is not a "dark" god in the sense implied here. Cernunnos is god of a happy underworld, and there is nothing dark or evil in him or in Bran and his congeners. Professor Rhys's "dark" divinities are sometimes, in his view, "light" gods, but they cannot be both. The Celtic lords of the dead had no "dark" character, and as



gods of fertility they were, so to speak, in league with the sun-god, the slayer of Bran, according to Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup>'s ingenious theory. And although to distracted Irish secretaries Ireland may be Hades, its introduction into this *Mabinogi* merely points to the interpretation of a mythico-historic connection between Wales and Ireland. Thus if Bran is Cernunnos, this is because he is a lord of the underworld of fertility, the counterpart of which is the distant Elysium, to which Bran seems rather to belong. Thus, in presence of his head, time passes as a dream in feasting and joy. This is a true Elysian note, and the tabued door of the story is also suggestive of the tabus of Elysium, which when broken rob men of happiness.<sup>301</sup> As to the power of the head in protecting the land, this points to actual custom and belief regarding the relics of the dead and the power of divine images or sculptured heads.<sup>302</sup> The god Bran has become a king and law-giver in the *Mabinogion* and the *Triads*,<sup>303</sup> while Geoffrey of Monmouth describes how Belinus and Brennus, in the Welsh version Beli and Bran, dispute the crown of Britain, are reconciled, and finally conquer Gaul and Rome.<sup>304</sup> The mythic Bran is confused with Brennus, leader of the Gauls against Rome in 390 B.C., and Belinus may be the god Belenos, as well as Beli, father of Lludd and Caswallawn. But Bran also figures as a Christian missionary. He is described as hostage at Rome for his son Caradawc, returning thence as preacher of Christianity to the Cymry—a legend arising out of a misunderstanding of his epithet "Blessed" and a confusing of his son with the historic Caractacus.<sup>305</sup> Hence Bran's family is spoken of as one of the three saintly families of Prydein, and he is ancestor of many saints.<sup>306</sup>

Branwen, "White Bosom," daughter of a sea-god, may be a sea-goddess, "Venus of the northern sea,"<sup>307</sup> unless with Mr. Nutt we connect her with the cauldron described in her legend,<sup>308</sup> symbol of an orgiastic cult, and regard her as a goddess of fertility. But the connection is not clear in the story, though in some earlier myth the cauldron may have been her property. As Brangwaine, she reappears in romance, giving a love-potion to Tristram—perhaps a reminiscence of her former functions as a goddess of love, or

earlier of fertility. In the *Mabinogion* she is buried in Anglesey at Ynys Bronwen, where a cairn with bones discovered in 1813 was held to be the grave and remains of Branwen.<sup>309</sup>

The children of Dôn, the equivalent of Danu, and probably like her, a goddess of fertility, are Gwydion, Gilvæthwy, Amæthon, Govannon, and Arianrhod, with her sons, Dylan and Llew.<sup>310</sup> These correspond, therefore, in part to the Tuatha Déa, though the only members of the group who bear names similar to the Irish gods are Govannon (= Goibniu) and possibly Llew (= Lug). Gwydion as a culture-god corresponds to Ogma. In the *Triads* Beli is called father of Arianrhod,<sup>311</sup> and assuming that this Arianrhod is identical with the daughter of Dôn, Professor Rhys regards Beli as husband of Dôn. But the identification is far from certain, and the theory built upon it that Beli is one with the Irish Bile, and that both are lords of a dark underworld, has already been found precarious.<sup>312</sup> In later belief Dôn was associated with the stars, the constellation Cassiopeia being called her court. She is described as "wise" in a *Taliesin* poem.<sup>313</sup>

This group of divinities is met with mainly in the *Mabinogi* of Math, which turns upon Gilvæthwy's illicit love of Math's "foot-holder" Goewin. To assist him in his *amour*, Gwydion, by a magical trick, procures for Math from the court of Pryderi certain swine sent him by Arawn, king of Annwfn. In the battle which follows when the trick is discovered, Gwydion slays Pryderi by enchantment. Math now discovers that Gilvæthwy has seduced Goewin, and transforms him and Gwydion successively into deer, swine, and wolves. Restored to human form, Gwydion proposes that Arianrhod should be Math's foot-holder, but Math by a magic test discovers that she is not a virgin. She bears two sons, Dylan, fostered by Math, and another whom Gwydion nurtures and for whom he afterwards by a trick obtains a name from Arianrhod, who had sworn never to name him. The name is Llew Llaw Gyffes, "Lion of the Sure Hand." By magic, Math and Gwydion form a wife for Llew out of flowers. She is called Blodeuwedd, and later, at the instigation of a lover, Gronw, she discovers how Llew can be killed. Gronw attacks and wounds him, and he flies off as an eagle. Gwydion seeks for Llew, discovers him, and retransforms him to human

shape. Then he changes Blodeuwedd into an owl, and slays Gronw.<sup>314</sup> Several independent tales have gone to the formation of this *Mabinogi*, but we are concerned here merely with the light it may throw on the divine characters who figure in it.

Math or Math Hen, "the Ancient,"<sup>315</sup> is probably an old divinity of Gwynedd, of which he is called lord. He is a king and a magician, pre-eminent in wizardry, which he teaches to Gwydion, and in a *Triad* he is called one of the great men of magic and metamorphosis of Britain.<sup>316</sup> More important are his traits of goodness to the suffering, and justice with no trace of vengeance to the wrong-doer. Whether these are derived from his character as a god or from the Celtic kingly ideal, it is impossible to say, though the former is by no means unlikely. Possibly his supreme magical powers make him the equivalent of the Irish "god of Druidism," but this is uncertain, since all gods were more or less dowered with these.

Gwydion's magical powers are abundantly illustrated in the tale. At Pryderi's court he changes fungus into horses and dogs, and afterwards slays Pryderi by power of enchantments; he produces a fleet by magic before Arianrhod's castle; with Math's help he forms Blodeuwedd out of flowers; he gives Llew his natural shape when he finds him as a wasted eagle on a tree, his flesh and the worms breeding in it dropping from him; he transforms the faithless Blodeuwedd into an owl. Some of these and other deeds are referred to in the *Taliesin* poems, while Taliesin describes himself as enchanted by Gwydion.<sup>317</sup> In the *Triads* he is one of the three great astrologers of Prydein, and this emphasis laid on his powers of divination is significant when it is considered that his name may be derived from a root *vet*, giving words meaning "saying" or "poetry," while cognate words are Irish *fáith*, "a prophet" or "poet," German *wuth*, "rage," and the name of Odinn.<sup>318</sup> The name is suggestive of the ecstasy of inspiration producing prophetic and poetic utterance. In the *Mabinogion* he is a mighty bard, and in a poem, he, under the name of Gweir, is imprisoned in the Other-world, and there becomes a bard, thus receiving inspiration from the gods' land.<sup>319</sup> He is the ideal *fáith*—diviner, prophet, and poet, and thus the god of those professing these arts. Strabo describes how the Celtic *vates*

(*fáith*) was also a philosopher, and this character is given in a poem to Seon (probably = Gwydion), whose artists are poets and magicians.<sup>320</sup> But he is also a culture-god, bringing swine to men from the gods' land. For though Pryderi is described as a mortal who has himself received the swine from Annwfn (Elysium), there is no doubt that he himself was a lord of Annwfn, and it was probably on account of Gwydion's theft from Annwfn that he, as Gweir, was imprisoned there "through the messenger of Pwyll and Pryderi."<sup>321</sup> A raid is here made directly on the god's land for the benefit of men, and it is unsuccessful, but in the *Mabinogi* a different version of the raid is told. Perhaps Gwydion also brought kine from Annwfn, since he is called one of the three herds of Britain,<sup>322</sup> while he himself may once have been an animal god, then an anthropomorphic deity associated with animals. Thus in the *Mabinogi*, when Gwydion flees with the swine, he rests each night at a place one of the syllables of which is *Moch*, "swine"—an ætiological myth explaining why places which were once sites of the cult of a swine-god, afterwards worshipped as Gwydion, were so called.

Gwydion has also a tricky, fraudulent character in the *Mabinogi*, and although "in his life there was counsel," yet he had a "vicious muse."<sup>323</sup> It is also implied that he is lover of his sister Arianrhod and father of Dylan and Llew—the mythic reflections of a time when such unions, perhaps only in royal houses, were permissible. Instances occur in Irish tales, and Arthur was also his sister's lover.<sup>324</sup> In later belief Gwydion was associated with the stars; and the Milky Way was called *Caer Gwydion*. Across it he had chased the faithless Blodeuwedd.<sup>325</sup> Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys equates him with Odinn, and regards both as representing an older Celto-Teutonic hero, though many of the alleged similarities in their respective mythologies are not too obvious.<sup>326</sup>

Amæthon the good is described in *Kulhwych* as the only husbandman who could till or dress a certain piece of land, though Kulhwych will not be able to force him or to make him follow him.<sup>327</sup> This, together with the name Amæthon, from Cymric *amæth*, "labourer" or "ploughman," throws some light on his functions.<sup>328</sup> He was a god associated with agriculture,

either as one who made waste places fruitful, or possibly as an anthropomorphic corn divinity. But elsewhere his taking a roebuck and a whelp, and in a *Triad*, a lapwing from Arawn, king of Annwfn, led to the battle of Godeu, in which he fought Arawn, aided by Gwydion, who vanquished one of Arawn's warriors, Bran, by discovering his name.<sup>329</sup> Amæthon, who brings useful animals from the gods' land, plays the same part as Gwydion, bringer of the swine. The dog and deer are frequent representatives of the corn-spirit, of which Amæthon may have been an anthropomorphic form, or they, with the lapwing, may have been earlier worshipful animals, associated with Amæthon as his symbols, while later myth told how he had procured them from Annwfn.

The divine functions of Llew Llaw Gyffes are hardly apparent in the *Mabinogi*. The incident of Blodeuwedd's unfaithfulness is simply that of the *Märchen* formula of the treacherous wife who discovers the secret of her husband's life, and thus puts him at her lover's mercy.<sup>330</sup> But since Llew is not slain, but changes to eagle form, this unusual ending may mean that he was once a bird divinity, the eagle later becoming his symbol. Some myth must have told of his death, or he was afterwards regarded as a mortal who died, for a poem mentions his tomb, and adds, "he was a man who never gave justice to any one." Dr. Skene suggests that truth, not justice, is here meant, and finds in this a reference to Llew's disguises.<sup>331</sup> Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup>, for reasons not held convincing by M. Loth, holds that *Llew*, "lion," was a misapprehension for his true name *Lleu*, interpreted by him "light."<sup>332</sup> This meaning he also gives to *Lug*, equating Lug and Llew, and regarding both as sun-gods. He also equates *Llaw Gyffes*, "steady or strong hand," with Lug's epithet *Lám fada*, "long hand," suggesting that *gyffes* may have meant "long," although it was Llew's steadiness of hand in shooting which earned him the title.<sup>333</sup> Again, Llew's rapid growth need not make him the sun, for this was a privilege of many heroes who had no connection with the sun. Llew's unfortunate matrimonial affairs are also regarded as a sun myth. Blodeuwedd is a dawn goddess dividing her love between the sun-god and the prince of darkness. Llew as the sun is overcome by the latter, but is restored by the culture-hero Gwydion, who slays the dark rival. The

transformation of Blodeuwedd into an owl means that the Dawn has become the Dusk.<sup>334</sup> As we have seen, all this is a *Märchen* formula with no mythical significance. Evidence of the precariousness of such an interpretation is furnished from the similar interpretation of the story of Curoi's wife, Blathnat, whose lover Cúchulainn slew Curoi.<sup>335</sup> Here a supposed sun-god is the treacherous villain who kills a dark divinity, husband of a dawn goddess.

If Llew is a sun-god, the equivalent of Lug, it is curious that he is never connected with the August festival in Wales which corresponds to Lughnasadh in Ireland. There may be some support to the theory which makes him a sun-god in a *Triad* where he is one of the three *ruddroawc* who cause a year's sterility wherever they set their feet, though in this Arthur excels them, for he causes seven years' sterility!<sup>336</sup> Does this point to the scorching of vegetation by the summer sun? The mythologists have not made use of this incident. On the whole the evidence for Llew as a sun-god is not convincing. The strongest reason for identifying him with Lug rests on the fact that both have uncles who are smiths and have similar names—Govannon and Gvida (Goibniu). Like Amæthon, Govannon, the artificer or smith (*gôf*, "smith"), is mentioned in *Kulhwych* as one whose help must be gained to wait at the end of the furrows to cleanse the iron of the plough.<sup>337</sup> Here he is brought into connection with the plough, but the myth to which the words refer is lost. A *Taliesin* poem associates him with Math—"I have been with artificers, with the old Math and with Govannon," and refers to his *Caer* or castle.<sup>338</sup>

Arianrhod, "silver wheel," has a twofold character. She pretends to be a virgin, and disclaims all knowledge of her son Llew, yet she is mistress of Gwydion. In the *Triads* she appears as one of the three blessed (or white) ladies of Britain.<sup>339</sup> Perhaps these two aspects of her character may point to a divergence between religion and mythology, the cult of a virgin goddess of whom myth told discreditable things. More likely she was an old Earth-goddess, at once a virgin and a fruitful mother, like Artemis, the virgin goddess, yet neither chaste nor fair, or like a Babylonian goddess addressed as at once "mother, wife, and maid." Arianrhod, "beauty famed beyond



summer's dawn," is mentioned in a *Taliesin* poem, and she was later associated with the constellation Corona Borealis.<sup>340</sup> Possibly her real name was forgotten, and that of Arianrhod derived from a place-name, "Caer Arianrhod," associated with her. The interpretation which makes her a dawn goddess, mother of light, Lleu, and darkness, Dylan, is far from obvious.<sup>341</sup> Dylan, after his baptism, rushed into the sea, the nature of which became his. No wave ever broke under him; he swam like a fish; and hence was called Dylan Eil Ton or "son of the wave." Govannon, his uncle, slew him, an incident interpreted as the defeat of darkness, which "hies away to lurk in the sea." Dylan, however, has no dark traits and is described as a blonde. The waves lament his death, and, as they dash against the shore, seek to avenge it. His grave is "where the wave makes a sullen sound," but popular belief identifies him with the waves, and their noise as they press into the Conway is his dying groan. Not only is he *Eil Ton*, "son of the wave," but also *Eil Mor*, "son of the sea."<sup>342</sup> He is thus a local sea-god, and like Manannan identified with the waves, and yet separate from them, since they mourn his death. The *Mabinogi* gives us the *débris* of myths explaining how an anthropomorphic sea-god was connected with the goddess Arianrhod and slain by a god Govannon.

Another *Mabinogion* group is that of Pwyll, prince of Dyved, his wife Rhiannon, and their son Pryderi.<sup>343</sup> Pwyll agrees with Arawn, king of Annwfn (Elysium), to reign over his kingdom for a year. At the end of that time he slays Arawn's rival Havgan. Arawn sends him gifts, and Pwyll is now known as Pen or Head of Annwfn, a title showing that he was once a god, belonging to the gods' land, later identified with the Christian Hades. Pwyll now agrees with Rhiannon,<sup>344</sup> who appears mysteriously on a magic hillock, and whom he captures, to rid her of an unwelcome suitor Gwawl. He imprisons him in a magical bag, and Rhiannon weds Pwyll. The story thus resolves itself into the formula of the Fairy Bride, but it paves the way for the vengeance taken on Pryderi and Rhiannon by Gwawl's friend Llwyd. Rhiannon has a son who is stolen as soon as born. She is accused of slaying him and is degraded, but Teyrnnon recovers the child from its super-human robber and calls him Gwri. As he grows up, Teyrnnon notices his

resemblance to Pwyll, and takes him to his court. Rhiannon is reinstated, and because she cries that her anguish (*pryderi*) is gone, the boy is now called Pryderi. Here, again, we have *Märchen* incidents, which also appear in the Fionn saga.<sup>[345](#)</sup>

Though there is little that is mythological here, it is evident that Pwyll is a god and Rhiannon a goddess, whose early importance, like that of other Celtic goddesses, appears from her name, a corruption of Rigantona, "great queen." Elsewhere we hear of her magic birds whose song charmed Bran's companions for seven years, and of her marriage to Manawyddan—an old myth in which Manawyddan may have been Pryderi's father, while possibly in some other myth Pryderi may have been child of Rigantona and Teyrnnon (=Tigernonos, "king").<sup>[346](#)</sup> We may postulate an old Rhiannon saga, fragments of which are to be found in the *Mabinogi*, and there may have been more than one goddess called Rigantona, later fused into one. But in the tales she is merely a queen of old romance.

Pryderi, as has been seen, was despoiled of his swine by Gwydion. They were the gift of Arawn, but in the *Triads* they seem to have been brought from Annwfn by Pwyll, while Pryderi acted as swineherd.<sup>[347](#)</sup> Both Pwyll and Pryderi are thus connected with those myths which told of the bringing of domestic animals from the gods' land. But since they are certainly gods, associated with the gods' land, this is perhaps the result of misunderstanding. A poem speaks of the magic cauldron of Pen Annwfn, *i.e.* Pwyll, and this points to a myth explaining his connection with Annwfn in a different way from the account in the *Mabinogi*. The poem also tells how Gweir was imprisoned in Caer Sidi (=Annwfn) "through the messenger of Pwyll and Pryderi."<sup>[348](#)</sup> They are thus lords of Annwfn, whose swine Gweir (Gwydion) tries to steal. Elsewhere Caer Sidi is associated with Manawyddan and Pryderi, perhaps a reference to their connection as father and son.<sup>[349](#)</sup> Thus Pryderi and Pwyll belong to the bright Elysium, and may once have been gods of fertility associated with the under-earth region, which was by no means a world of darkness. Whatever be the meaning of the death of Pryderi at the hands of Gwydion, it is connected with later references to his grave.<sup>[350](#)</sup>



A fourth group is that of Beli and his sons, referred to in the *Mabinogi* of Branwen, where one of them, Caswallawn, usurps the throne, and thus makes Manawyddan, like MacGregor, landless. In the *Dream of Maxen*, the sons of Beli are Lludd, Caswallawn, Nynnyaw, and Llevelys.<sup>351</sup> Geoffrey calls Beli Heli, and speaks of an earlier king Belinus, at enmity with his brother Brennius.<sup>352</sup> But probably Beli or Heli and Belinus are one and the same, and both represent the earlier god Belenos. Caswallawn becomes Cassivellaunus, opponent of Cæsar, but in the *Mabinogi* he is hostile to the race of Llyr, and this may be connected with whatever underlies Geoffrey's account of the hostility of Belinus and Brennius (=Bran, son of Llyr), perhaps, like the enmity of the race of Dôn to Pryderi, a reminiscence of the strife of rival tribes or of Goidel and Brython.<sup>353</sup> As has been seen, the evidence for regarding Beli as Dôn's consort or the equivalent of Bile is slender. Nor, if he is Belenos, the equivalent of Apollo, is he in any sense a "dark" god. He is regarded as a victorious champion, preserver of his "honey isle" and of the stability of his kingdom, in a *Taliesin* poem and in the *Triads*.<sup>354</sup>

The personality of Casswallawn is lost in that of the historic Cassivellaunus, but in a reference to him in the *Triads* where, with Caradawc and Gweirydd, he bears the title "war king," we may see a glimpse of his divine character, that of a god of war, invisibly leading on armies to battle, and as such embodied in great chiefs who bore his name.<sup>355</sup> Nynnyaw appears in Geoffrey's pages as Nennius, who dies of wounds inflicted by Cæsar, to the great grief of Cassivellaunus.<sup>356</sup>

The theory that Lludd Llaw Ereint or *Lodens Lamargentios* represents *Nodens* (Nuada) *L=amargentios*, the change being the result of alliteration, has been contested,<sup>357</sup> while if the Welsh Lludd and Nudd were identical it is strange that they should have become distinct personalities, Gwyn, son of Nudd, being the lover of Creiddylad, daughter of Lludd,<sup>358</sup> unless in some earlier myth their love was that of brother and sister. Lludd is also confused or is identical with Llyr, just as the Irish Ler is with Alloid. He is probably the son of Beli who, in the tale of *Lludd and Llevelys*, by the advice of

Llevelys rids his country of three plagues.<sup>359</sup> These are, first, the Coranians who hear every whisper, and whom he destroys by throwing over them water in which certain insects given him by Levelys have been bruised. The second is a shriek on May-eve which makes land and water barren, and is caused by a dragon which attacks the dragon of the land. These Lludd captures and imprisons at Dinas Emreis, where they afterwards cause trouble to Vortigern at the building of his castle. The third is that of the disappearance of a year's supply of food by a magician, who lulls every one to sleep and who is captured by Lludd. Though the Coranians appear in the *Triads* as a hostile tribe,<sup>360</sup> they may have been a supernatural folk, since their name is perhaps derived from *còr*, "dwarf," and they are now regarded as mischievous fairies.<sup>361</sup> They may thus be analogous to the Fomorians, and their story, like that of the dragon and the magician who produce blight and loss of food, may be based on older myth or ritual embodying the belief in powers hostile to fertility, though it is not clear why those powers should be most active on May-day. But this may be a misunderstanding, and the dragons are overcome on May-eve. The references in the tale to Lludd's generosity and liberality in giving food may reflect his function as a god of growth, but, like other euhemerised gods, he is also called a mighty warrior, and is said to have rebuilt the walls of *Caer Ludd* (London), his name still surviving in "Ludgate Hill," where he was buried.<sup>362</sup> This legend doubtless points to some ancient cult of Lludd at this spot.

Nudd already discussed under his title *Nodons*, is less prominent than his son *Gwyn*, whose fight with *Gwthur* we have explained as a mythic explanation of ritual combats for the increase of fertility. He also appears as a hunter and as a great warrior,<sup>363</sup> "the hope of armies," and thus he may be a god of fertility who became a god of war and the chase. But legend associated him with *Annwfn*, and regarded him, like the *Tuatha Déa*, as a king of fairyland.<sup>364</sup> In the legend of *S. Collen*, the saint tells two men, whom he overhears speaking of *Gwyn* and the fairies, that these are demons. "Thou shalt receive a reproof from *Gwyn*," said one of them, and soon after *Collen* was summoned to meet the king of *Annwfn* on *Glastonbury Tor*. He climbed the hill with a flask of holy water, and saw on

its top a splendid castle, with crowds of beautiful and youthful folk, while the air resounded with music. He was brought to Gwyn, who politely offered him food, but "I will not eat of the leaves of the tree," cried the saint; and when he was asked to admire the dresses of the crowd, all he would say was that the red signified burning, the blue coldness. Then he threw the holy water over them, and nothing was left but the bare hillside.<sup>365</sup> Though Gwyn's court on Glastonbury is a local Celtic Elysium, which was actually located there, the story marks the hostility of the Church to the cult of Gwyn, perhaps practised on hilltops, and this is further seen in the belief that he hunts souls of the wicked and is connected with Annwfn in its later sense of hell. But a mediant view is found in *Kulhwych*, where it is said of him that he restrains the demons of hell lest they should destroy the people of this world. In the *Triads* he is, like other gods, a great magician and astrologer.<sup>366</sup>

Another group, unknown to the *Mabinogion*, save that Taliesin is one of the bearers of Bran's head, is found in the *Book of Taliesin* and in the late story of Taliesin. These, like the *Arthur* cycle, often refer to personages of the *Mabinogion*; hence we gather that local groups of gods, originally distinct, were later mingled in story, the references in the poems reflecting this mingling. Late as is the *Hanes Taliesin* or story of Taliesin, and expressed as much of it is in a *Märchen* formula, it is based on old myths about Cerridwen and Taliesin of which its compiler made use, following an old tradition already stereotyped in one of the poems in the *Märchen* formula of the Transformation Combat.<sup>367</sup> But the mythical fragments are also mingled with traditions regarding the sixth century poet Taliesin. The older saga was perhaps developed in a district south of the Dyfi estuary.<sup>368</sup> In Lake Tegid dwell Tegid Voel, Cerridwen, and their children—the fair maiden Creirwy, Morvran, and the ugly Avagddu. To give Avagddu knowledge, his mother prepares a cauldron of inspiration from which three drops of inspiration will be produced. These fall on the finger of Gwion, whom she set to stir it. He put the finger in his mouth, and thus acquired the inspiration. He fled, and Cerridwen pursued, the rest of the story being accommodated to the Transformation Combat formula. Finally, Cerridwen

as a hen swallows Gwion as a grain of wheat, and bears him as a child, whom she throws into the sea. Elphin, who rescues him, calls him Taliesin, and brings him up as a bard.<sup>369</sup>

The water-world of Tegid is a submarine Elysium with the customary cauldron of inspiration, regeneration, and fertility, like the cauldron associated with a water-world in the *Mabinogion*. "Shall not my chair be defended from the cauldron of Cerridwen," runs a line in a Taliesin poem, while another speaks of her chair, which was probably in Elysium like that of Taliesin himself in Caer Sidi.<sup>370</sup> Further references to her connection with poetry show that she may have been worshipped by bards, her cauldron being the source of their inspiration.<sup>371</sup> Her anger at Gwion may point to some form of the Celtic myth of the theft of the elements of culture from the gods' land. But the cauldron was first of all associated with a fertility cult,<sup>372</sup> and Cerridwen must therefore once have been a goddess of fertility, who, like Brigit, was later worshipped by bards. She may also have been a corn-goddess, since she is called a goddess of grain, and tradition associates the pig—a common embodiment of the corn-spirit—with her.<sup>373</sup> If the tradition is correct, this would be an instance, like that of Demeter and the pig, of an animal embodiment of the corn-spirit being connected with a later anthropomorphic corn-goddess.

Taliesin was probably an old god of poetic inspiration confused with the sixth century poet of the same name, perhaps because this boastful poet identified himself or was identified by other bards with the gods. He speaks of his "splendid chair, inspiration of fluent and urgent song" in Caer Sidi or Elysium, and, speaking in the god's name or identifying himself with him, describes his presence with Llew, Bran, Gwydion, and others, as well as his creation and his enchantment before he became immortal.<sup>374</sup> He was present with Arthur when a cauldron was stolen from Aunwfn, and basing his verses on the mythic transformations and rebirths of the gods, recounts in highly inflated language his own numerous forms and rebirths.<sup>375</sup> His claims resemble those of the *Shaman* who has the entree of the spirit-world and can transform himself at will. Taliesin's rebirth is connected with his

acquiring of inspiration. These incidents appear separately in the story of Fionn, who acquired his inspiration by an accident, and was also said to have been reborn as Mongan. They are myths common to various branches of the Celtic people, and applied in different combinations to outstanding gods or heroes.<sup>376</sup> The *Taliesin* poems show that there may have been two gods or two mythic aspects of one god, later combined together. He is the son of the goddess and dwells in the divine land, but he is also a culture-hero stealing from the divine land. Perhaps the myths reflect the encroachment of the cult of a god on that of a goddess, his worshippers regarding him as her son, her worshippers reflecting their hostility to the new god in a myth of her enmity to him. Finally, the legend of the rescue of Taliesin the poet from the waves became a myth of the divine outcast child rescued by Elphin, and proving himself a bard when normal infants are merely babbling.

The occasional and obscure references to the other members of this group throw little light on their functions, save that Morvran, "sea-crow," is described in *Kulhwych* as so ugly and terrible that no one would strike him at the battle of Camlan. He may have been a war-god, like the scald-crow goddesses of Ireland, and he is also spoken of in the *Triads* as an "obstructor of slaughter" or "support of battle."<sup>377</sup>

Ingenuity and speculation have busied themselves with trying to prove that the personages of the Arthurian cycle are the old gods of the Brythons, and the incidents of the romances fragments of the old mythology. While some of these personages—those already present in genuinely old Welsh tales and poems or in Geoffrey's *History*—are reminiscent of the old gods, the romantic presentment of them in the cycle itself is so largely imaginative, that nothing certain can be gained from it for the understanding of the old mythology, much less the old religion. Incidents which are the common stock of real life as well as of romance are interpreted mythologically, and it is never quite obvious why the slaying of one hero by another should signify the conquest of a dark divinity by a solar hero, or why the capture of a heroine by one knight when she is beloved of another, should make her a dawn-goddess sharing her favours, now with the

sun-god, now with a "dark" divinity. Or, even granting the truth of this method, what light does it throw on Celtic religion?

We may postulate a local Arthur saga fusing an old Brythonic god with the historic sixth century Arthur. From this or from Geoffrey's handling of it sprang the great romantic cycle. In the ninth century Nennius Arthur is the historic war-chief, possibly Count of Britain, but in the reference to his hunting the *Porcus Troit* (the *Twrch Trwyth*) the mythic Arthur momentarily appears.<sup>378</sup> Geoffrey's Arthur differs from the later Arthur of romance, and he may have partially rationalised the saga, which was either of recent formation or else local and obscure, since there is no reference to Arthur in the *Mabinogion*—a fact which shows that "in the legends of Gwynedd and Dyfedd he had no place whatever,"<sup>379</sup> and also that Arthur the god or mythic hero was also purely local. In Geoffrey Arthur is the fruit of Igerna's *amour* with Uther, to whom Merlin has given her husband's shape. Arthur conquers many hosts as well as giants, and his court is the resort of all valorous persons. But he is at last wounded by his wife's seducer, and carried to the Isle of Avallon to be cured of his wounds, and nothing more is ever heard of him.<sup>380</sup> Some of these incidents occur also in the stories of Fionn and Mongan, and those of the mysterious begetting of a wonder child and his final disappearance into fairyland are local forms of a tale common to all branches of the Celts.<sup>381</sup> This was fitted to the history of the local god or hero Arthur, giving rise to the local saga, to which was afterwards added events from the life of the historic Arthur. This complex saga must then have acquired a wider fame long before the romantic cycle took its place, as is suggested by the purely Welsh tales of *Kulhwych* and the *Dream of Rhonabwy*, in the former of which the personages (gods) of the *Mabinogion* figure in Arthur's train, though he is far from being the Arthur of the romances. Sporadic references to Arthur occur also in Welsh literature, and to the earlier saga belongs the Arthur who spoils Elysium of its cauldron in a *Taliesin* poem.<sup>382</sup> In the *Triads* there is a mingling of the historic, the saga, and the later romance Arthur, but probably as a result of the growing popularity of the saga Arthur he is added to many Triads as a more remarkable person than the three whom they describe.<sup>383</sup> Arthurian place-



names over the Brythonic area are more probably the result of the popularity of the saga than that of the later romantic cycle, a parallel instance being found in the extent of Ossianic place-names over the Goidelic area as a result of the spread of the Fionn saga.

The character of the romance Arthur—the flower of knighthood and a great warrior—and the blending of the historic war-leader Arthur with the mythic Arthur, suggest that the latter was the ideal hero of certain Brythonic groups, as Fionn and Cúchulainn of certain Goidelic groups. He may have been the object of a cult as these heroes perhaps were, or he may have been a god more and more idealised as a hero. If the earlier form of his name was Artor, "a ploughman," but perhaps with a wider significance, and having an equivalent in Artaius, a Gaulish god equated with Mercury,<sup>384</sup> he may have been a god of agriculture who became a war-god. But he was also regarded as a culture-hero, stealing a cauldron and also swine from the gods' land, the last incident euhemerised into the tale of an unsuccessful theft from March, son of Meirchion,<sup>385</sup> while, like other culture-heroes, he is a bard. To his story was easily fitted that of the wonder-child, who, having finally disappeared into Elysium (later located at Glastonbury), would reappear one day, like Fionn, as the Saviour of his people. The local Arthur finally attained a fame far exceeding that of any Brythonic god or hero.

Merlin, or Myrddin, appears in the romances as a great magician who is finally overcome by the Lady of the Lake, and is in Geoffrey son of a mysterious invisible personage who visits a woman, and, finally taking human shape, begets Merlin. As a son who never had a father he is chosen as the foundation sacrifice for Vortigern's tower by his magicians, but he confutes them and shows why the tower can never be built, namely, because of the dragons in the pool beneath it. Then follow his prophecies regarding the dragons and the future of the country, and the story of his removal of the Giant's Dance, or Stonehenge, from Ireland to its present site—an ætiological myth explaining the origin of the great stone circle. His description of how the giants used the water with which they washed the stones for the cure of sickness or wounds, probably points to some ritual for healing in connection with these megaliths. Finally, we hear of his

transformation of the lovelorn Uther and of his confidant Ulfin, as well as of himself.<sup>386</sup> Here he appears as little more than an ideal magician, possibly an old god, like the Irish "god of Druidism," to whose legend had been attached a story of supernatural conception. Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys regards him as a Celtic Zeus or as the sun, because late legends tell of his disappearance in a glass house into the sea. The glass house is the expanse of light travelling with the sun (Merlin), while the Lady of the Lake who comes daily to solace Merlin in his enchanted prison is a dawn-goddess. Stonehenge was probably a temple of this Celtic Zeus "whose late legendary self we have in Merlin."<sup>387</sup> Such late romantic episodes and an ætiological myth can hardly be regarded as affording safe basis for these views, and their mythological interpretation is more than doubtful. The sun is never prisoner of the dawn as Merlin is of Viviane. Merlin and his glass house disappear for ever, but the sun reappears every morning. Even the most poetic mythology must conform in some degree to actual phenomena, but this cannot be said of the systems of mythological interpretation. If Merlin belongs to the pagan period at all, he was probably an ideal magician or god of magicians, prominent, perhaps, in the Arthur saga as in the later romances, and credited with a mysterious origin and an equally mysterious ending, the latter described in many different ways.

The boastful Kei of the romances appears already in *Kulhwych*, while in Geoffrey he is Arthur's seneschal.<sup>388</sup> Nobler traits are his in later Welsh poetry; he is a mighty warrior, fighting even against a hundred, though his powers as a toper are also great. Here, too, his death is lamented.<sup>389</sup> He may thus have been a god of war, and his battle-fury may be poetically described in a curious passage referring to him in *Kulhwych*: "His breath lasted nine days and nine nights under water. He could remain without sleep for the same period. No physician could heal a wound inflicted by his sword. When he pleased he could make himself as tall as the tallest tree in the wood. And when it rained hardest, whatever he carried remained dry above and below his hand to the distance of a handbreadth, so great was his natural heat. When it was coldest he was as glowing fuel to his companions."<sup>390</sup> This almost exactly resembles Cúchulainn's aspect in his



battle-fury. In a curious poem Gwenhyvar (Guinevere) extols his prowess as a warrior above that of Arthur, and in *Kulhwych* and elsewhere there is enmity between the two.<sup>391</sup> This may point to Kei's having been a god of tribes hostile to those of whom Arthur was hero.

Mabon, one of Arthur's heroes in *Kulhwych* and the *Dream of Rhonabwy*, whose name, from *mab* (*map*), means "a youth," may be one with the god Maponos equated with Apollo in Britain and Gaul, perhaps as a god of healing springs.<sup>392</sup> His mother's name, Modron, is a local form of *Matrona*, a river-goddess and probably one of the mother-goddesses as her name implies. In the *Triads* Mabon is one of the three eminent prisoners of Prydein. To obtain his help in hunting the magic boar his prison must be found, and this is done by animals, in accordance with a *Märchen* formula, while the words spoken by them show the immense duration of his imprisonment—perhaps a hint of his immortality.<sup>393</sup> But he was also said to have died and been buried at Nantlle,<sup>394</sup> which, like Gloucester, the place of his prison, may have been a site of his widely extended cult.<sup>395</sup>

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Taken as a whole the various gods and heroes of the Brythons, so far as they are known to us, just as they resemble the Irish divinities in having been later regarded as mortals, magicians, and fairies, so they resemble them in their functions, dimly as these are perceived. They are associated with Elysium, they are lords of fertility and growth, of the sea, of the arts of culture and of war. The prominent position of certain goddesses may point to what has already been discovered of them in Gaul and Ireland—their pre-eminence and independence. But, like the divinities of Gaul and Ireland, those of Wales were mainly local in character, and only in a few cases attained a wider popularity and cult.

Certain British gods mentioned on inscriptions may be identified with some of those just considered—Nodons with Nudd or Lludd, Belenos with Belinus or Beli, Maponos with Mabon, Taranos (in continental inscriptions only), with a Taran mentioned in *Kulhwych*.<sup>396</sup> Others are referred to in

classical writings—Andrasta, a goddess of victory, to whom Boudicca prayed;<sup>397</sup> Sul, a goddess of hot springs, equated with Minerva at Bath.<sup>398</sup> Inscriptions also mention Epona, the horse-goddess; Brigantia, perhaps a form of Brigit; Belisama (the Mersey in Ptolemy),<sup>399</sup> a goddess in Gaulish inscriptions. Others refer to the group goddesses, the *Matres*. Some gods are equated with Mars—Camulos, known also on the Continent and perhaps the same as Cumal, father of Fionn; Belatucadros, "comely in slaughter"; Cocidius, Corotiacus, Barrex, and Totatis (perhaps Lucan's Teutates). Others are equated with Apollo in his character as a god of healing—Anextiomarus, Grannos (at Musselburgh and in many continental inscriptions), Arvalus, Mogons, etc. Most of these and many others found on isolated inscriptions were probably local in character, though some, occurring also on the Continent, had attained a wider popularity.<sup>400</sup> But some of the inscriptions referring to the latter may be due to Gaulish soldiers quartered in Britain.

### COMPARATIVE TABLE OF DIVINITIES WITH SIMILAR NAMES IN IRELAND, BRITAIN, AND GAUL.

*Italics denote names found in Inscriptions.*

IRELAND.	BRITAIN.	GAUL.
	Anextiomarus	Anextiomarus
Anu	Anna (?)	<i>Anoniredi</i> , "chariot of Anu"
Badb		Bodua
	Beli, Belinus	Belenos
	Belisama	Belisama
Brigit	Brigantia	Brigindu
Bron	Bran	Brennus (?)
Buanann		Buanu
Cumal	Camulos	Camulos
Danu	Dôn	
	Epona	Epona
Goibniu	Govannon	
	Grannos	Grannos

Ler	Llyr	
Lug	Llew or Lleu (?)	Lugus, <i>Lugores</i>
	Mabon, <i>Maponos</i>	Maponos
Manannan	Manawyddan	
	Matres	Matres
Mider		<i>Medros</i> (?)
	Modron	<i>Matrona</i> (?)
Nemon		Nemetona
Nét		Neton
Nuada	<i>Nodons</i> , Nudd	
	Hael, Llûdd (?)	
Ogma		Ogmíós
	Silvanus	Silvanus
	Taran	Taranis
	Totatis, Tutatis	Teutates

[276.](#) The text of the *Mabinogion* has been edited by Rh<sup>ys</sup> and Evans, 1887, and it has been translated into English by Lady Guest, and more critically, into French, by Loth. Many of the *Triads* will be found in Loth's second volume. For the poetry see Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*.

[277.](#) These incidents are found mainly in the story of Branwen, *e.g.* those of the cauldron, a frequent accessory in Irish tales; the regeneration of the warriors, also found in the story of Mag-tured, though no cauldron is used; the red-hot house, occurring also in *Mesca Ulad*; the description of Bran paralleled by that of MacCecht.

[278.](#) Anwyl, *ZCP* i. 277, ii. 124, iii. 122.

[279.](#) Bp. of S. Davids, *Vestiges of the Gael in Gwynned*, 1851; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *TSC* 1894-1895, 21.

[280.](#) Skene, i. 45; Meyer, *TSC* 1895-1896, 55.

[281.](#) Cf. John, *The Mabinogion*, 1901, 19. Curoi appears as Kubert, and Conchobar as Knychur in *Kulhwych* (Loth, i. 202). A poem of *Taliesin* has for subject the death of Corroi, son of Dayry (Curoi mac Daire), Skene, i. 254.

[282.](#) Loth, *RC* x. 356; John, *op. cit.* 19; Nutt, *Arch. Rev.* i. 331.

[283.](#) The giant Yspadden in *Kulhwych* resembles Balor, but has no evil eye.

[284.](#) Anwyl, *ZCP* ii. 127-128, "The merging of the two legends of Dôn and Taliesin may have arisen through the fusion of Penllyn with Ardudwy and Arvon."

[285.](#) Professor Rh<sup>ys</sup> thinks that the Llyr family may be pre-Celtic, *TSC* 1894-1895, 29 f.; *CFL* 552.

- [286.](#) Loth, i. 97 f.; Lady Guest, iii. 143 f.
- [287.](#) See Nutt, *Folk-lore Record*, v. 1 f.
- [288.](#) Loth, i. 298, ii. 243-244; Geoffrey, *Hist. Brit.* ii. 11.
- [289.](#) Loth, i. 224, 265, ii. 215, 244; Geoff. ii. 11.
- [290.](#) Skene, i. 81; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *Academy*, Jan. 7, 1882.
- [291.](#) *Triads*, Loth, ii. 293; Nutt, *Folk-lore Record*, v. 9.
- [292.](#) *Hist. Brit.* ii. 11-14.
- [293.](#) *AL* 131.
- [294.](#) Skene, i. 262.
- [295.](#) See Nutt-Meyer, ii. 17.
- [296.](#) Skene, i. 276.
- [297.](#) Loth, i. 208, 280; see also i. 197, ii. 245, 294.
- [298.](#) See Skene i. 355. The raven is rather the bird of prey come to devour Urien than his "attribute."
- [299.](#) Skene, i. 298.
- [300.](#) For these theories see Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 90f.; *AL* ch. 11; *CFL* 552.
- [301.](#) See Ch. XXIV.
- [302.](#) See p. 242.
- [303.](#) Loth, i. 65, ii. 285.
- [304.](#) *Hist. Brit.* iii. 1f. Geoffrey says that Billingsgate was called after Belinus, and that his ashes were preserved in the gate, a tradition recalling some connection of the god with the gate.
- [305.](#) An early Caradawc saga may have become mingled with the story of Caractacus.
- [306.](#) Rees, 77.
- [307.](#) So Elton, 291.
- [308.](#) *Folk-lore Record*, v. 29.
- [309.](#) Lady Guest, iii. 134.
- [310.](#) Dôn is sometimes held to be male, but she is distinctly called sister of Math (Loth, i. 134), and as the equivalent of Danu she must be female.
- [311.](#) Loth, ii. 209.
- [312.](#) See p. 60, *supra*, and Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 90f.
- [313.](#) Lady Guest, iii. 255; Skene, i. 297, 350.
- [314.](#) For this *Mabinogi* see Loth, i. 117f.; Guest, iii. 189f.
- [315.](#) Skene, i. 286.

- [316.](#) Loth, ii. 229, 257; and for other references to Math, Skene, i. 281, 269, 299.
- [317.](#) Skene, i. 296, 281.
- [318.](#) Loth, ii. 297; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 276.
- [319.](#) Skene, i. 264.
- [320.](#) Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 270. Skene, i. 430, 537, gives a different meaning to *seon*.
- [321.](#) Skene, i. 264.
- [322.](#) Loth, ii. 296.
- [323.](#) Skene, i. 299, 531.
- [324.](#) See p. 224, *infra*.
- [325.](#) Guest, iii. 255; Morris, *Celtic Remains*, 231.
- [326.](#) *HL* 283 *f*. See also Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* i. 131.
- [327.](#) Loth, i. 240.
- [328.](#) Stokes, *US* 34.
- [329.](#) *Myvyrian Archæol.* i. 168; Skene, i. 275, 278 *f*.; Loth, ii. 259.
- [330.](#) See my *Childhood of Fiction*, 127. Llew's vulnerability does not depend on the discovery of his separable soul, as is usual. The earliest form of this *Märchen* is the Egyptian story of the Two Brothers, and that of Samson and Delilah is another old form of it.
- [331.](#) Skene, i. 314, ii. 342.
- [332.](#) *HL* 408; *RC* x. 490.
- [333.](#) *HL* 237, 319, 398, 408.
- [334.](#) *HL* 384.
- [335.](#) *HL* 474, 424.
- [336.](#) Loth, ii. 231.
- [337.](#) Loth, i. 240.
- [338.](#) Skene, i, 286-287.
- [339.](#) Loth, ii. 263.
- [340.](#) Skene, ii. 159; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 157; Guest, iii. 255.
- [341.](#) Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 161, 566.
- [342.](#) Skene, i. 282, 288, 310, 543, ii. 145; Loth, i. 135; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 387.
- [343.](#) Loth, i. 27 *f*.; Guest, iii. 7 *f*.
- [344.](#) Rhiannon is daughter of Heveidd Hen or "the Ancient," probably an old divinity.
- [345.](#) In the *Mabinogi* and in Fionn tales a mysterious hand snatches away newly-born children. Cf. *ZCP* i. 153.

- [346.](#) Anwyl, *ZCP* i. 288.
- [347.](#) Loth, ii. 247.
- [348.](#) Skene, i. 264.
- [349.](#) *Ibid.* i. 276.
- [350.](#) *Ibid.* i. 310.
- [351.](#) Loth, i. 166.
- [352.](#) *Hist. Brit.* ii. 11, iii. 1, 20, iv. 3.
- [353.](#) Cf. Anwyl, *ZCP* i. 287.
- [354.](#) Skene, i. 431; Loth, ii. 278. Some phrases seem to connect Beli with the sea—the waves are his cattle, the brine his liquor.
- [355.](#) Loth, ii. 209, 249, 260, 283.
- [356.](#) Geoffrey, *Brit. Hist.* iv. 3. 4.
- [357.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 125 f.; Loth, i. 265; MacBain, *CM* ix. 66.
- [358.](#) See Loth, i. 269; and Skene, i. 293.
- [359.](#) Loth, i. 173 f.
- [360.](#) Loth, ii. 256, 274.
- [361.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 606. Cf. the Breton fairies, the *Korr* and *Korrigan*.
- [362.](#) Geoffrey, iii. 20.
- [363.](#) Loth, i. 253-254; Skene, i. 293.
- [364.](#) Guest, iii. 323.
- [365.](#) *Ibid.* 325.
- [366.](#) Loth, i. 253, ii. 297.
- [367.](#) See p. 353, *infra.*; Skene, i. 532.
- [368.](#) Anwyl, *ZCP* i. 293.
- [369.](#) Guest, iii. 356 f.
- [370.](#) Skene, i. 275, 296.
- [371.](#) *Ibid.* i. 498, 500.
- [372.](#) See p. 382, *infra.*
- [373.](#) *Mon. Hist. Brit.* i. 698, ii.; Thomas, *Revue de l'hist. des Religions*, xxxviii. 339.
- [374.](#) Skene, i. 263, 274-276, 278, 281-282, 286-287. His "chair" bestows immortal youth and freedom from sickness.
- [375.](#) Skene, i. 264, 376 f., 309, 532. See p. 356, *infra.*

[376.](#) See pp. 350-1, *infra*. Fionn and Taliesin are examples of the *Märchen* formula of a hero expelled and brought back to honour, Nutt-Meyer, ii. 88.

[377.](#) Loth, i. 209, ii. 238; Skene, ii. 459.

[378.](#) Nennius, ch. 50, 79.

[379.](#) Anwyl, *ZCP* i. 293.

[380.](#) Geoffrey, viii. 9-xi. 3.

[381.](#) Nutt-Meyer, ii. 22 f.

[382.](#) See p. 381, *infra*.

[383.](#) Loth, ii. 232, 245.

[384.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *AL*, 39 f. Others derive the name from *arto-s*, "bear." MacBain, 357.

[385.](#) Loth. ii. 247; Skene, ii. 459.

[386.](#) Geoffrey, vi. 17-19, vii. viii. 1, 10-12, 19. In a poem (Skene, i. 478), Myrddin is called "the man who speaks from the grave"—a conception familiar to the Celts, who thought of the dead as living on in the grave. See p. 340, *infra*.

[387.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL*, 154 f., 158-159, 194.

[388.](#) Geoffrey, ix. 12, etc.

[389.](#) Skene, ii. 51.

[390.](#) Loth. i. 225; cf. p. 131, *infra*. From this description Elton supposes Kei to have been a god of fire.

[391.](#) *Myv. Arch.* i. 175; Loth, i. 269. Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *AL* 59, thinks Merlin may have been Guinevere's ravisher.

[392.](#) Holder, i. 414.

[393.](#) Loth i. 250, 260 f., 280, ii. 215, 244.

[394.](#) Skene, i. 363, ii. 406; *Myv. Arch.* i. 78.

[395.](#) Hu Gadarn is mentioned in the *Triads* as a leader of the Cymry from the east and their teacher in ploughing. He divided them into clans, and invented music and song. The monster *avanc* was drawn by him from the lake which had burst and caused the flood (see p. 231, *infra*). Perhaps Hu is an old culture-god of some tribes, but the *Triads* referring to him are of late date (Loth, ii. 271, 289, 290-291, 298-299). For the ridiculous Neo-Druidic speculations based on Hu, see Davies, *Celtic Researches* and *Mythology and Rites of the Druids*.

Gurgiunt, son of Belinus, in Geoffrey, iii. 11, may be the French legendary Gargantua, perhaps an old god. See the works of Sébillot and Gaidoz on *Gargantua*.

[396.](#) Loth, i. 270.

[397.](#) Dio Cassius, lxii. 6.

[398.](#) Solinus, xxii. 10. See p. 2, *supra*.

[399.](#) Ptol. ii. 3. 2.

[400.](#) For all these see Holder, *s.v.*



# The Cúchulainn Cycle

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The events of the Cúchulainn cycle are supposed to date from the beginning of the Christian era—King Conchobar's death synchronising with the crucifixion. But though some personages who are mentioned in the Annals figure in the tales, on the whole they deal with persons who never existed. They belong to a world of romance and myth, and embody the ideals of Celtic paganism, modified by Christian influences and those of classical tales and romantic sagas of other regions, mainly Scandinavian. The present form of the tales as they exist in the *Book of the Dun Cow* and the *Book of Leinster* must have been given them in the seventh or eighth century, but they embody materials of a far older date. At an early time the saga may have had a more or less definite form, but new tales were being constantly added to it, and some of the longer tales are composed of incidents which once had no connection with each other.

Cúchulainn is the central figure of the cycle, and its central episode is that of the *Táin bó Cuailgne*, or "Cattle Spoil of Cooley." Other personages are Conchobar and Dechtire, Ailill and Medb, Fergus, Conall Cernach, Cúroi, Deirdre, and the sons of Usnach. Some of these are of divine descent, some are perhaps euhemerised divinities; Conchobar is called *día talmaide*, "a terrestrial god," and Dechtire a goddess. The cycle opens with the birth of Conchobar, son of Cathbad and of Nessa, daughter of one of the Tuatha Dé Danann, though in an older rescension of the tale he is Nessa's son by the god Lug. During Conchobar's reign over Ulster Cúchulainn was born. He was son of Dechtire, either by Sualtam, or by her brother Conchobar, or by the god Lug, of whom he may also be a reincarnation.<sup>[401](#)</sup> Like other heroes of saga, he possesses great strength and skill at a tender age, and, setting out for Conchobar's court, overpowers the king's "boy corps," and then becomes their chief. His next adventure is the slaying of the watch-dog of Culann the smith, and his appeasing the anger of its owner by offering to act as his watch-dog. Cathbad now announced that his name

would henceforth be Cú Chulainn, "Culann's hound."<sup>402</sup> At the mature age of seven he obtained Conchobar's spears, sword, shield, and chariot, and with these he overcame three mighty champions, returning in the distortion of his "battle-fury" to Emania. To prevent mischief from his rage, the women went forth naked to meet him. He modestly covered his eyes, for it was one of his *geasa* not to look on a woman's breast. Thus taken unawares, he was plunged into three successive vats of cold water until his natural appearance was restored to him, although the water boiled and hissed from his heat.<sup>403</sup>

As Cúchulainn grew up, his strength, skill, wisdom, and beauty were unsurpassed. All women fell in love with him, and to forestall a series of *bonnes fortunes*, the men of Ulster sought a wife for him. But the hero's heart was set on Emer, daughter of Forgall, whom he wooed in a strange language which none but she could understand. At last she consented to be his wife if he would slay a number of warriors. Forgall was opposed to the match, and with a view to Cúchulainn's destruction suggested that he should go to Donall in Alba to increase his skill, and to Scathach if he would excel all other warriors. He agreed, provided that Forgall would give him whatever he asked for on his return. Arrived in Alba, he refused the love of Donall's daughter, Dornolla, who swore to be avenged. Thence he went to Scathach, overcoming all the dangers of the way, leaping in safety the gulf surrounding her island, after essaying in vain to cross a narrow, swinging bridge. From Scathach he learned supreme skill in arms, and overcame her Amazonian rival Aife. He begat a son by Aife, and instructed her to call him Conla, to give him his father's ring, to send him to seek Cúchulainn, and to forbid him to reveal his name. In the sequel, Cúchulainn, unaware that Conla was his son, slew him in single combat, too late discovering his identity from the ring which he wore. This is the well-known saga formula of Sohrab and Rustum, of Theseus and Hippolytus. On his return from Scathach's isle Cúchulainn destroyed Forgall's *rath* with many of its inmates, including Forgall, and carried off Emer. To the ten years which followed, during which he was the great champion of Ulster, belong many tales in which he figures prominently. One of these is *The Debility of the*

*Ultonians*. This was caused by Macha, who, during her pregnancy, was forced to run a race with Conchobar's horses. She outran them, but gave birth immediately to twins, and, in her pangs, cursed the men of Ulster, with a curse that, in time of oppression, they would be overcome with the weakness of childbirth. From this Cúchulainn was exempt, for he was not of Ulster, but a son of Lug.<sup>404</sup> Various attempts have been made to explain this "debility." It may be a myth explaining a Celtic use of the "couvade," though no example of a simultaneous tribal couvade is known, unless we have here an instance of Westermarck's "human pairing season in primitive times," with its consequent simultaneous birth-period for women and couvade for men.<sup>405</sup> Others, with less likelihood, explain it as a period of tabu, with cessation from work and warfare, at a funeral or festival.<sup>406</sup> In any case Macha's curse is a myth explanatory of the origin of some existing custom, the duration of which is much exaggerated by the narrator. To this period belong also the tale of Cúchulainn's visit to Elysium, and others to be referred to later. Another story describes his attack upon Morrigan because she would neither yield up the cows which she was driving away nor tell her true name—an instance of the well-known name tabu. Morrigan took the form of a bird, and was then recognised by Cúchulainn, who poured scorn upon her, while she promised to oppose him during the fight of the *Táin* in the forms of an eel, a wolf, and a cow, all of which he vowed to destroy.<sup>407</sup> Like many others in the saga, this story is introductory to the main episode of the *Táin*. To this we now turn.

Medb had been wife of Conchobar, but, leaving him, had married in succession two chiefs called Ailill, the second of whom had a bull, Findbennach, the White-horned, which she resolved to match by one in every way its equal. Having been refused the Brown Bull of Cuailgne, she summoned all her forces to invade Ulster. The moment was inauspicious for Ulster, for all its men were suffering from their "debility." Cúchulainn, therefore, went out to encounter the host, and forced Medb to agree that a succession of her warriors should engage him in single combat. Among these was his old friend Ferdia, and nothing is so touching as his reluctance to fight him or so pathetic as his grief when Ferdia falls. The reluctance is

primarily due to the tie of blood-brotherhood existing between them. Finally, the Ulstermen rose in force and defeated Medb, but not before she had already captured the bull and sent it into her own land. There it was fought by the Findbennach and slew it, rushing back to Ulster with the mangled body on its horns. But in its frenzy a rock seemed to be another bull, which it charged; its brains were dashed out, and it fell dead.

The Morrigan had warned the bull of the approach of Medb's army, and she had also appeared in the form of a beautiful woman to Cúchulainn offering him her love, only to be repulsed. Hence she turned against him, and described how she would oppose him as an eel, a wolf, and a red heifer—an incident which is probably a variant of that already described.<sup>408</sup> In each of these shapes she was conquered and wounded by the hero, and knowing that none whom he hurt could be healed save by himself, she appeared to him as an old crone milking a cow. At each draught of the milk which he received from her he blessed her with "the blessing of gods and not-gods," and so her wounds were healed.<sup>409</sup> For this, at a later time, she tried to ward off his death, but unsuccessfully. During the progress of the *Táin*, one of Cúchulainn's "fairy kinsmen," namely, Lug, who announced himself as his father, appeared to aid him, while others of the Tuatha Déa threw "herbs of healing" into the streams in which his wounds were washed.<sup>410</sup>

During the *Táin*, Cúchulainn slaughtered the wizard Calatin and his daughters. But Calatin's wife bore three posthumous sons and three daughters, and through their means the hero was at last slain. Everything was done to keep him back from the host which now advanced against Ulster, but finally one of Calatin's daughters took the form of Niamh and bade him go forth. As he passed to the fight, Calatin's daughters persuaded him to eat the flesh of a dog—a fatal deed, for it was one of his *geasa* never to eat dog's flesh. So it was that in the fight he was slain by Lugaid,<sup>411</sup> and his soul appeared to the thrice fifty queens who had loved him, chanting a mystic song of the coming of Christ and the day of doom—an interesting example of a phantasm coincidental with death.<sup>412</sup> This and other Christian touches show that the Christian redactors of the saga felt tenderly towards

the old pagan hero. This is even more marked in the story in which he appears to King Loegaire and S. Patrick, begging the former to believe in God and the saint, and praying Patrick to "bring me with thy faithful ones unto the land of the living."<sup>413</sup> A similar Christianising appears in the story of Conchobar's death, the result of his mad frenzy on hearing from his Druid that an earthquake is the result of the shameful crucifixion of Christ.<sup>414</sup>

In the saga, Cúchulainn appears as the ideal Celtic warrior, but, like other ideal warriors, he is a "magnified, non-natural man," many of his deeds being merely exaggerations of those common among barbaric folk. Even his "distortion" or battle frenzy is but a magnifying of the wild frenzy of all wild fighters. To the person of this ideal warrior, some of whose traits may have been derived from traditional stories of actual heroes, *Märchen* and saga episodes attached themselves. Of every ideal hero, Celtic, Greek, Babylonian, or Polynesian, certain things are told—his phenomenal strength as a child; his victory over enormous forces; his visits to the Other-world; his amours with a goddess; his divine descent. These belong to the common stock of folk-tale episodes, and accumulate round every great name. Hence, save in the colouring given to them or the use made of them by any race, they do not afford a key to the mythic character of the hero. Such deeds are ascribed to Cúchulainn, as they doubtless were to the ideal heroes of the "undivided Aryans," but though parallels may be found between him and the Greek Heracles, they might just as easily be found in non-Aryan regions, *e.g.* in Polynesia. Thus the parallels between Cúchulainn and Heracles throw little light on the personality of the former, though here and there in such parallels we observe a peculiarly Celtic touch. Thus, while the Greek hero rescues Hesione from a dragon, it is from three Fomorians that Cúchulainn rescues Devorgilla, namely, from beings to whom actual human sacrifice was paid. Thus a *Märchen* formula of world-wide existence has been moulded by Celtic religious belief and ritual practice.<sup>415</sup>

It was inevitable that the "mythological school" should regard Cúchulainn as a solar hero. Thus "he reaches his full development at an

unusually early age," as the sun does,<sup>416</sup> but also as do many other heroes of saga and *Märchen* who are not solar. The three colours of Cúchulainn's hair, dark near the skin, red in the middle, golden near the top, are claimed to be a description of the sun's rays, or of the three parts into which the Celts divided the day.<sup>417</sup> Elsewhere his tresses are yellow, like Prince Charlie's in fact and in song, yet he was not a solar hero. Again, the seven pupils of his eyes perhaps "referred to the days of the week."<sup>418</sup> Blindness befell all women who loved him, a reference to the difficulty of gazing at the sun.<sup>419</sup> This is prosaic! The blindness was a compliment paid to Cúchulainn the blind, by women who made themselves blind while talking to him, just as Conall Cernach's mistresses squinted as he did.<sup>420</sup> Cúchulainn's blindness arose from his habit of sinking one eye into his head and protruding the other—a well-known solar trait! His "distortion," during which, besides this "blindness," blood shot upwards from his head and formed a magic mist, and his anger caused showers of sparks to mount above him, points to dawn or sunset,<sup>421</sup> though the setting sun would rather suggest a hero sinking calmly to rest than a mad giant setting out to slaughter friend and foe. The "distortion," as already pointed out, is the exaggerated description of the mad warrior rage, just as the fear which produced death to those who saw him brandish his weapons, was also produced by Maori warrior methods.<sup>422</sup> Lug, who may be a sun-god, has no such "distortion." The cooling of the hero in three vats, the waters of which boil over, and his emergence from them pinky red in colour, symbolise the sun sinking into the waters and reappearing at dawn.<sup>423</sup> Might it not describe in an exaggerated way the refreshing bath taken by frenzied warriors, the water being supposed to grow warm from the heat of their bodies?<sup>424</sup> One of the hero's *geasa* was not to see Manannan's horses, the waves; which, being interpreted, means that the sun is near its death as it approaches the sea. Yet Lug, a sun-god, rides the steed Enbarr, a personification of the waves, while Cúchulainn himself often crossed the sea, and also lived with the sea-god's wife, Fand, without coming to grief. Again, the magic horses which he drives, black and grey in colour, are "symbols of day and night,"<sup>425</sup> though it is not



obvious why a grey horse should symbolise day, which is not always grey even in the isles of the west. Unlike a solar hero, too, Cúchulainn is most active in winter, and rests for a brief space from slaughtering at midday—the time of the sun's greatest activity both in summer and winter.

Another theory is that every visit of the hero to a strange land signifies a descent to Hades, suggested by the sun sinking in the west. Scathach's island may be Hades, but it is more probably Elysium with some traits borrowed from the Christian idea of hell. But Emer's land, also visited by Cúchulainn, suggests neither Hades nor Elysium. Emer calls herself *ingen rig richis garta*, translated by Professor Rhys as "daughter of the coal-faced king," *i.e.* she is daughter of darkness. Hence she is a dawn-maiden and becomes the sun-hero's wife.<sup>426</sup> There is nothing in the story to corroborate this theory, apart from the fact that it is not clear, even to the hypothetical primitive mind, why dawn and sun should be a divine pair. Emer's words probably mean that she is "daughter of a king" and "a flame of hospitality" (*richis garta*.)<sup>427</sup> Cúchulainn, in visiting her, went from west to east, contrary to the apparent course of the sun. The extravagance of the solar theory is further seen in the hypothesis that because Cúchulainn has other wives, the sun-god made love to as many dawn-maidens as there are days in the year,<sup>428</sup> like the king in Louys' romance with his 366 wives, one for each day of the year, leap-year included.

Further examples of the solar theory need not be cited. It is enough to see in Cúchulainn the ideal warrior, whose traits are bombastic and obscure exaggerations of actual custom and warfare, or are borrowed from folk-tale *motifs* not exclusively Celtic. Possibly he may have been a war-god, since he is associated with Badb<sup>429</sup> and also with Morrigan. But he has also some traits of a culture hero. He claims superiority in wisdom, in law, in politics, in the art of the *Filid*, and in Druidism, while he brings various things from the world of the gods<sup>430</sup>. In any case the Celts paid divine honours to heroes, living or dead,<sup>431</sup> and Cúchulainn, god or ideal hero, may have been the subject of a cult. This lends point to the theory of M. D'Arbois that Cúchulainn and Conall Cernach are the equivalents of Castor and Pollux, the Dioscuri, said by Diodorus to be worshipped among the Celts near the

Ocean.<sup>432</sup> Cúchulainn, like Pollux, was son of a god, and was nursed, according to some accounts, by Findchoém, mother of Conall,<sup>433</sup> just as Leda was mother of Castor as well as of Pollux. But, on the other hand, Cúchulainn, unlike Pollux, was mortal. M. D'Arbois then identifies the two pairs of heroes with certain figures on an altar at Cluny. These are Castor and Pollux; Cernunnos and Smertullos. He equates Castor with Cernunnos, and Pollux with Smertullos. Smertullos is Cúchulainn, and the name is explained from an incident in the *Táin*, in which the hero, reproached for his youth, puts on a false beard before attacking Morrigan in her form as an eel. This is expressed by *smérthain*, "to attach", and is thus connected with and gave rise to the name Smertullos. On the altar Smertullos is attacking an eel or serpent. Hence Pollux is Smertullos-Cúchulainn.<sup>434</sup> Again, the name Cernunnos signifies "the horned one," from *cernu*, "horn," a word found in Conall's epithet Cernach. But this was not given him because he was horned, but because of the angular shape of his head, the angle (*cern*) being the result of a blow.<sup>435</sup> The epithet may mean "victorious."<sup>436</sup> On the whole, the theory is more ingenious than convincing, and we have no proof that the figures of Castor and Pollux on the altar were duplicates of the Celtic pair. Cernunnos was an underworld god, and Conall has no trace of such a character.

M. D'Arbois also traces the saga in Gaul in the fact that on the menhir of Kervadel Mercury is figured with a child, Mercury, in his opinion, being Lug, and the child Cúchulainn.<sup>437</sup> On another altar are depicted (1) a woodman, Esus, cutting down a tree, and (2) a bull on which are perched three birds—Tarvos Trigaranos. The two subjects, as M. Reinach points out, are combined on another altar at Trèves, on which a woodman is cutting down a tree in which are perched three birds, while a bull's head appears in the branches.<sup>438</sup> These represent, according to M. D'Arbois, incidents of the *Táin*—the cutting down of trees by Cúchulainn and placing them in the way of his enemies, and the warning of the bull by Morrigan in the bird form which she shared with her sisters Badb and Macha.<sup>439</sup> Why, then, is Cúchulainn called Esus? "Esus" comes from a root which gives words



meaning "rapid motion," "anger," "strength"—all shown by the hero.<sup>440</sup> The altars were found in the land of the Belgic Treveri, and some Belgic tribes may have passed into Britain and Ireland carrying the Esus-Cúchulainn legend there in the second century B.C., e.g. the Setantii, dwelling by the Mersey, and bearing a name similar to that of the hero in his childhood—Setanta (*Setantios*) as well as the Menapii and Brigantes, located in Ireland by Ptolemy.<sup>441</sup> In other words, the divine Esus, with his surname Smertullos, was called in Ireland Setanta, after the Setantii, and at a later date, Cúchulainn. The princely name Donnotaurus resembles *Dond tarb*, the "Brown Bull" of the saga, and also suggests its presence in Gaul, while the name (dêiotaros), perhaps the equivalent of *De^uio-taruos*, "Divine Bull," is found in Galatia.<sup>442</sup> Thus the main elements of the saga may have been known to the continental Celts before it was localised in Ireland,<sup>443</sup> and, it may be added, if it was brought there by Gallo-British tribes, this might account for the greater popularity of the native, possibly pre-Celtic, Fionn saga among the folk, as well as for the finer literary quality of the Cúchulainn saga. But the identification of Esus with Cúchulainn rests on slight grounds; the names Esus and Smertullos are not found in Ireland, and the Gaulish Esus, worshipped with human sacrifice, has little affinity with the hero, unless his deeds of slaughter are reminiscent of such rites. It is possible, however, that the episode of the *Táin* came from a myth explaining ritual acts. This myth may have been the subject of the bas-reliefs, carried to Ireland, and there worked into the saga.

The folk-versions of the saga, though resembling the literary versions, are less elaborate and generally wilder, and perhaps represent its primitive form.<sup>444</sup> The greatest differences are found in versions of the *Táin* and of Cúchulainn's death, which, separate in the saga, are parts of one folk-tale, the death occurring during the fighting over the bull. The bull is his property, and Medb sends Garbh mac Stairn to take it from him. He pretends to be a child, goes to bed, and tricks Garbh, who goes off to get the bull. Cúchulainn arrives before him and personates the herdsman. Each seizes a horn, and the bull is torn in two.<sup>445</sup> Does this represent the primitive form of the *Táin*, and, further, were the bull and Cúchulainn once

one and the same—a bull, the incarnation of a god or vegetation spirit, being later made anthropomorphic—a hero-god whose property or symbol was a bull? Instances of this process are not unknown among the Celts.<sup>446</sup> In India, Indra was a bull and a divine youth, in Greece there was the bull-Dionysos, and among the Celts the name of the divine bull was borne by kings.<sup>447</sup> In the saga Morrigan is friendly to the bull, but fights for Medb; but she is now friendly, now hostile to Cúchulainn, finally, however, trying to avert his doom. If he had once been the bull, her friendliness would not be quite forgotten, once he became human and separate from the bull. When she first met Cúchulainn she had a cow on whom the Brown Bull was to beget a calf, and she told the hero that "So long as the calf which is in this cow's body is a yearling, it is up to that time that thou art in life; and it is this that will lead to the *Táin*."<sup>448</sup> This suggests that the hero was to die in the battle, but it shows that the Brown Bull's calf is bound up his life. The Bull was a reincarnation of a divine swineherd, and if, as in the case of Cúchulainn, "his rebirth could only be of himself,"<sup>449</sup> the calf was simply a duplicate of the bull, and, as it was bound up with the hero's life, bull and hero may well have been one. The life or soul was in the calf, and, as in all such cases, the owner of the soul and that in which it is hidden are practically identical. Cúchulainn's "distortion" might then be explained as representing the bull's fury in fight, and the folk-tales would be popular forms of an old myth explaining ritual in which a bull, the incarnation of a tree or vegetation spirit, was slain, and the sacred tree cut down and consumed, as in Celtic agricultural ritual. This would be the myth represented on the bas-reliefs, and in the ritual the bull would be slain, rent, and eaten by his worshippers. Why, then, should Cúchulainn rend the bull? In the later stages of such rites the animal was slain, not so much as a divine incarnation as a sacrifice to the god once incarnated in him. And when a god was thus separated from his animal form, myths often arose telling how he himself had slain the animal.<sup>450</sup> In the case of Cúchulainn and the bull, the god represented by the bull became separate from it, became anthropomorphic, and in that form was associated with or actually was the hero Cúchulainn. Bull sacrifices were common among the Celts with whom

the bull had been a divine animal.<sup>451</sup> Possibly a further echo of this myth and ritual is to be found in the folk-belief that S. Martin was cut up and eaten in the form of an ox—the god incarnate in the animal being associated with a saint.<sup>452</sup> Thus the literary versions of the *Táin*, departing from the hypothetical primitive versions, kept the bull as the central figure, but introduced a rival bull, and described its death differently, while both bulls are said to be reincarnations of divine swine-herds.<sup>453</sup> The idea of a fight for a bull is borrowed from actual custom, and thus the old form of the story was further distorted.

The Cúchulainn saga is more coherent than the Fionn saga, because it possesses one central incident. The "canon" of the saga was closed at an early date, while that of Fionn has practically never been closed, mainly because it has been more a saga of the folk than that of Cúchulainn. In some respects the two may have been rivals, for if the Cúchulainn saga was introduced by conquerors from Britain or Gaul, it would not be looked on with favour by the folk. Or if it is the saga of Ulster as opposed to that of Leinster, rivalry would again ensue. The Fionn saga lives more in the hearts of the people, though it sometimes borrows from the other. This borrowing, however, is less than some critics, *e.g.* Zimmer, maintain. Many of the likenesses are the result of the fact that wherever a hero exists a common stock of incidents becomes his. Hence there is much similarity in all sagas wherever found.

<sup>401</sup>. *IT* i. 134; Nutt-Meyer, ii. 38 f.; Windisch, *Táin*, 342; L. Duvau, "La Légende de la Conception de Cúchulainn," *RC* ix. 1 f.

<sup>402</sup>. Windisch, *Táin*, 118 f. For a similar reason Finnchad was called Cú Cerca, "the hound of Cerc" (*IT* iii. 377).

<sup>403</sup>. For the boyish exploits, see Windisch, *Táin*, 106 f.

<sup>404</sup>. *RC* vii. 225; Windisch, *Táin*, 20. Macha is a granddaughter of Ler, but elsewhere she is called Mider's daughter (*RC* xvi. 46).

<sup>405</sup>. Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* ii. 654; Westermarck, *Hist. of Human Marriage*, ch. 2.

<sup>406</sup>. Miss Hull, *Folk-Lore*, xii. 60, citing instances from Jevons, *Hist. of Religion*, 65.

<sup>407</sup>. Windisch, *IT* ii. 239.

- [408.](#) Windisch, 184, 312, 330; cf. *IT* iii. 355; Miss Hull, 164 f.; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 468.
- [409.](#) *LL* 119a; *RC* iii. 175.
- [410.](#) Windisch, 342.
- [411.](#) *RC* iii. 175 f.
- [412.](#) *Ibid.* 185.
- [413.](#) Crowe, *Jour. Kilkenny Arch. Soc.* 1870-1871, 371 f.
- [414.](#) *LL* 79a; O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 640.
- [415.](#) *LL* 125a. See my *Childhood of fiction*, ch. 14.
- [416.](#) Miss Hull, lxxvi.
- [417.](#) "Da Derga's Hostel," *RC* xxii. 283; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 438.
- [418.](#) *LL* 68a; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, 437; Ingcel the one-eyed has also many pupils (*RC* xxii. 58).
- [419.](#) Miss Hull, lxiii.
- [420.](#) *RC* viii. 49.
- [421.](#) *LL* 77b; Miss Hull, lxii.
- [422.](#) Other Celtic heroes undergo this distortion, which resembles the Scandinavian warrior rage followed by languor, as in the case of Cúchulainn.
- [423.](#) Miss Hull, p. lxvi.
- [424.](#) Irish saints, standing neck deep in freezing water, made it hot.
- [425.](#) *IT* i. 268; D'Arbois, v. 103; Miss Hull, lxvi.
- [426.](#) *HL* 448.
- [427.](#) See Meyer, *RC* xi. 435; Windisch, *IT* i. 589, 740. Though *richis* means "charcoal," it is also glossed "flame," hence it could only be glowing charcoal, without any idea of darkness.
- [428.](#) *HL* 458.
- [429.](#) *IT* i. 107.
- [430.](#) *Arch. Rev.* i. 1 f.; *IT* i. 213; see p. 381, *infra*.
- [431.](#) See p. 164, *infra*.
- [432.](#) Diod. Siculus, iv. 56.
- [433.](#) *IT* iii. 393.
- [434.](#) *Les Celtes*, 58 f. Formerly M. D'Arbois identified Smertullos with Lug, ii. 217; Holder, i. 46, 262. For the incident of the beard, see Windisch, *Táin*, 308.
- [435.](#) *IT* iii. 395.
- [436.](#) *IT* i. 420.
- [437.](#) *RC* xxvii. 319 f.

[438.](#) *RC* xviii. 256.

[439.](#) *Les Celtes*, 63; *RC* xix. 246.

[440.](#) D'Arbois, *RC* xx. 89.

[441.](#) D'Arbois, *RC* xxvii. 321; *Les Celtes*, 65.

[442.](#) *Les Celtes*, 49; Cæsar, vi. 14.

[443.](#) In contradiction to this, M. D'Arbois elsewhere thinks that Druids from Britain may have taught the Cúchulainn legend in Gaul (*RC* xxvii. 319).

[444.](#) See versions in *Book of the Dean of Lismore*; *CM* xiii.; Campbell, *The Fians*, 6 f.

[445.](#) *CM* xiii. 327, 514. The same story is told of Fionn, *ibid.* 512. See also ballad versions in Campbell, *LF* 3 f.

[446.](#) See p. 212, *infra*.

[447.](#) A Galatian king was called Brogitaros, probably a form of *Brogitaruos*, "bull of the province," a title borne by Conchobar, *tarb in chóicid* (*IT* i. 72). This with the epithets applied to heroes in the *Triads*, "bull-phantom," "prince bull of combat" (*Loth*, ii. 232, 243), may be an appellative denoting great strength.

[448.](#) *IT* ii. 241 f.; D'Arbois, *Les Druides*, 168.

[449.](#) Miss Hull, 58.

[450.](#) See p. 212, *infra*.

[451.](#) See p. 208, *infra*.

[452.](#) Fitzgerald, *RC* vi. 254.

[453.](#) See p. 243, *infra*.

# The Fionn Saga

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The most prominent characters in the Fionn saga, after the death of Fionn's father Cumal, are Fionn, his son Oisín, his grandson Oscar, his nephew Diarmaid with his *ball-seire*, or "beauty-spot," which no woman could resist; Fergus famed for wisdom and eloquence; Caoilte mac Ronan, the swift; Conan, the comic character of the saga; Goll mac Morna, the slayer of Cumal, but later the devoted friend of Fionn, besides a host of less important personages. Their doings, like those of the heroes of saga and epos everywhere, are mainly hunting, fighting, and love-making. They embody much of the Celtic character—vivacity, valour, kindness, tenderness, as well as boastfulness and fiery temper. Though dating from pagan times, the saga throws little light upon pagan beliefs, but reveals much concerning the manners of the period. Here, as always in early Celtdom, woman is more than a mere chattel, and occupies a comparatively high place. The various parts of the saga, like those of the Finnish *Kalevala*, always existed separately, never as one complete epos, though always bearing a certain relation to each other. Lonnrot, in Finland, was able, by adding a few connecting links of his own, to give unity to the *Kalevala*, and had MacPherson been content to do this for the Fionn saga, instead of inventing, transforming, and serving up the whole in the manner of the sentimental eighteenth century, what a boon would he have conferred on Celtic literature. The various parts of the saga belong to different centuries and come from different authors, all, however, imbued with the spirit of the Fionn tradition.

A date cannot be given to the beginnings of the saga, and additions have been made to it even down to the eighteenth century, Michael Comyn's poem of Oisín in Tir na n-Og being as genuine a part of it as any of the earlier pieces. Its contents are in part written, but much more oral. Much of it is in prose, and there is a large poetic literature of the ballad kind, as well as *Märchen* of the universal stock made purely Celtic, with Fionn and the

rest of the heroic band as protagonists. The saga embodies Celtic ideals and hopes; it was the literature of the Celtic folk on which was spent all the riches of the Celtic imagination; a world of dream and fancy into which they could enter at all times and disport themselves. Yet, in spite of its immense variety, the saga preserves a certain unity, and it is provided with a definite framework, recounting the origin of the heroes, the great events in which they were concerned, their deaths or final appearances, and the breaking up of the Fionn band.

The historic view of the Fians is taken by the annalists, by Keating, O'Curry, Dr. Joyce, and Dr. Douglas Hyde.<sup>454</sup> According to this view, they were a species of militia maintained by the Irish kings for the support of the throne and the defence of the country. From Samhain to Beltane they were quartered on the people, and from Beltane to Samhain they lived by hunting. How far the people welcomed this billeting, we are not told. Their method of cooking the game which they hunted was one well known to all primitive peoples. Holes were dug in the ground; in them red-hot stones were placed, and on the stones was laid venison wrapped in sedge. All was then covered over, and in due time the meat was done to a turn. Meanwhile the heroes engaged in an elaborate toilette before sitting down to eat. Their beds were composed of alternate layers of brushwood, moss, and rushes. The Fians were divided into *Catha* of three thousand men, each with its commander, and officers to each hundred, each fifty, and each nine, a system not unlike that of the ancient Peruvians. Each candidate for admission to the band had to undergo the most trying ordeals, rivalling in severity those of the American Indians, and not improbably genuine though exaggerated reminiscences of actual tests of endurance and agility. Once admitted he had to observe certain *geasa* or "tabus," e.g. not to choose his wife for her dowry like other Celts, but solely for her good manners, not to offer violence to a woman, not to flee when attacked before less than nine warriors, and the like.

All this may represent some genuine tradition with respect to a warrior band, with many exaggerations in details and numbers. Some of its outstanding heroes may have had names derived from or corresponding to

those of the heroes of an existing saga. But as time went on they became as unhistorical as their ideal prototypes; round their names crystallised floating myths and tales; things which had been told of the saga heroes were told of them; their names were given to the personages of existing folk-tales. This might explain the great divergence between the "historical" and the romantic aspects of the saga as it now exists. Yet we cannot fail to see that what is claimed as historical is full of exaggeration, and, in spite of the pleading of Dr. Hyde and other patriots, little historic fact can be found in it. Even if this exists, it is the least important part of the saga. What is important is that part—nine-tenths of the whole—which "is not true because it cannot be true." It belongs to the region of the supernatural and the unreal. But personages, nine-tenths of whose actions belong to this region, must bear the same character themselves, and for that reason are all the more interesting, especially when we remember that the Celts firmly believed in them and in their exploits. A Fionn myth arose as all myths do, increasing as time went on, and the historical nucleus, if it ever existed, was swamped and lost. Throughout the saga the Fians are more than mere mortals, even in those very parts which are claimed as historical. They are giants; their story "bristles with the supernatural"; they are the ideal figures of Celtic legend throwing their gigantic shadows upon the dim and misty background of the past. We must therefore be content to assume that whether personages called Fionn, Oisín, Diarmaid, or Conan, ever existed, what we know of them now is purely mythical.

Bearing in mind that they are the cherished heroes of popular fancy in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, we have now to inquire whether they were Celtic in origin. We have seen that the Celts were a conquering people in Ireland, bringing with them their own religion and mythology, their own sagas and tales reflected now in the mythological and Cúchulainn cycles, which found a local habitation in Ireland. Cúchulainn was the hero of a saga which flourished more among the aristocratic and lettered classes than among the folk, and there are few popular tales about him. But it is among the folk that the Fionn saga has always been popular, and for every peasant who could tell a story of Cúchulainn a thousand could tell one of Fionn.



Conquerors often adopt beliefs, traditions, and customs of the aboriginal folk, after hostilities have ceased, and if the pre-Celtic people had a popular hero and a saga concerning him, it is possible that in time it was accepted by the Celts or by the lower classes among them. But in the process it must have been completely Celticised, like the aborigines themselves; to its heroes were given Celtic names, or they may have been associated with existing Celtic personages like Cumal, and the whole saga was in time adapted to the conceptions and legendary history of the Celts. Thus we might account for the fact that it has so largely remained without admixture with the mythological and Cúchulainn cycles, though its heroes are brought into relation with the older gods. Thus also we might account for its popularity as compared with the Cúchulainn saga among the peasantry in whose veins must flow so much of the aboriginal blood both in Ireland and the Highlands. In other words, it was the saga of a non-Celtic people occupying both Ireland and Scotland. If Celts from Western Europe occupied the west of Scotland at an early date, they may have been so few in number that their own saga or sagas died out. Or if the Celtic occupation of the West Highlands originated first from Ireland, the Irish may have been unable to impose their Cúchulainn saga there, or if they themselves had already adopted the Fionn saga and found it again in the Highlands, they would but be the more attached to what was already localised there. This would cut the ground from the theory that the Fionn saga was brought to Scotland from Ireland, and it would account for its popularity in the Highlands, as well as for the fact that many Fionn stories are attached to Highland as well as to Irish localities, while many place-names in both countries have a Fian origin. Finally, the theory would explain the existence of so many *Märchen* about Fionn and his men, so few about Cúchulainn.

Returning to the theory of the historic aspect of the Fians, it should be noted that, while, when seen through the eyes of the annalists, the saga belongs to a definite historical period, when viewed by itself it belongs to a mythic age, and though the Fians are regarded as champions of Ireland, their foes are usually of a supernatural kind, and they themselves move in a magic atmosphere. They are also brought into connection with the

unhistoric Tuatha Dé Danann; they fight with them or for them; they have amours with or wed their women; and some of the gods even become members of the Fian band. Diarmaid was the darling of the gods Oengus and Manannan, and in his direst straits was assisted by the former. In all this we are in the wonderland of myth, not the *terra firma* of history. There is a certain resemblance between the Cúchulainn and Fionn sagas, but no more than that which obtains between all sagas everywhere. Both contain similar incidents, but these are the stock episodes of universal saga belief, fitted to the personages of individual sagas. Hence we need not suppose with Professor Windisch that the mythic incidents of the Fionn saga are derived from the Cúchulainn cycle.

The personages against whom Fionn and his men fight show the mythic nature of the saga. As champions of Leinster they fight the men of Ulster and Connaught, but they also war against oversea invaders—the Lochlanners. While Lochlann may mean any land beyond the sea, like the Welsh *Llychlyn* it probably meant "the fabulous land beneath the lakes or the waves of the sea," or simply the abode of hostile, supernatural beings. Lochlanners would thus be counterparts of the Fomorians, and the conflicts of the Fians with them would reflect old myths. But with the Norse invasions, the Norsemen became the true Lochlanners, against whom Fionn and his men fight as Charlemagne fought Muhammadans—a sheer impossibility. Professor Zimmer, however, supposes that the Fionn saga took shape during the Norse occupation from the ninth century onwards. Fionn is half Norse, half Irish, and equivalent to Caittil Find, who commanded the apostate Irish in the ninth century, while Oisín and Oscar are the Norse Asvin and Asgeirr. But it is difficult to understand why one who was half a Norseman should become the chosen hero of the Celts in the very age in which Norsemen were their bitter enemies, and why Fionn, if of Norse origin, fights against Lochlanners, *i.e.* Norsemen. It may also be inquired why the borrowing should have affected the saga only, not the myths of the gods. No other Celtic scholar has given the slightest support to this brilliant but audacious theory. On the other hand, if the saga has Norse affinities, and if it is, in origin, pre-Celtic, these may be sought in an earlier

connection of Ireland with Scandinavia in the early Bronze Age. Ireland had a flourishing civilisation then, and exported beautiful gold ornaments to Scandinavia, where they are still found in Bronze Age deposits.<sup>455</sup> This flourishing civilisation was overwhelmed by the invasion of the Celtic barbarians. But if the Scandinavians borrowed gold and artistic decorations from Ireland, and if the Fionn saga or part of it was already in existence, why should they not have borrowed some of its incidents, or why, on the other hand, should not some episodes have found their way from the north to Ireland? We should also consider, however, that similar incidents may have been evolved in both countries on similar lines and quite independently.

The various contents of the saga can only be alluded to in the briefest manner. Fionn's birth-story belongs to the well-known "Expulsion and Return" formula, applied to so many heroes of saga and folk-tale, but highly elaborated in his case at the hands of the annalists. Thus his father Cumal, uncle of Conn the Hundred Fighter, 122-157 A.D., wished to wed Muirne, daughter of Conn's chief druid, Tadg. Tadg refused, knowing that through this marriage he would lose his ancestral seat. Cumal seized Muirne and married her, and the king, on Tadg's appeal, sent an army against him. Cumal was slain; Muirne fled to his sister, and gave birth to Demni, afterwards known as Fionn. Perhaps in accordance with old matriarchal usage, Fionn's descent through his mother is emphasised, while he is related to the ancient gods, Tadg being son of Nuada. This at once points to the mythical aspect of the saga. Cumal may be identical with the god Camulos. In a short time, Fionn, now a marauder and an outlaw, appeared at Conn's Court, and that same night slew one of the Tuatha Déa, who came yearly and destroyed the palace. For this he received his rightful heritage—the leadership of the Fians, formerly commanded by Cumal.<sup>456</sup> Another incident of Fionn's youth tells how he obtained his "thumb of knowledge." The eating of certain "salmon of knowledge" was believed to give inspiration, an idea perhaps derived from earlier totemistic beliefs. The bard Finnéces, having caught one of the coveted salmon, set his pupil Fionn to cook it, forbidding him to taste it. But as he was turning the fish Fionn burnt

his thumb and thrust it into his mouth, thus receiving the gift of inspiration. Hereafter he had only to suck his thumb in order to obtain secret information.<sup>457</sup> In another story the inspiration is already in his thumb, as Samson's strength was in his hair, but the power is also partly in his tooth, under which, after ritual preparation, he has to place his thumb and chew it.<sup>458</sup>

Fionn had many wives and sweethearts, one of them, Saar, being mother of Oisín. Saar was turned into a fawn by a Druid, and fled from Fionn's house. Long after he found a beast-child in the forest and recognised him as his son. He nourished him until his beast nature disappeared, and called him Oisín, "little fawn." Round this birth legend many stories sprang up—a sure sign of its popularity.<sup>459</sup> Oisín's fame as a poet far excelled that of Fionn, and he became the ideal bard of the Gaels.

By far the most passionate and tragic story of the saga is that of Diarmaid and Grainne, to whom Fionn was betrothed. Grainne put *geasa* upon Diarmaid to elope with her, and these he could not break. They fled, and for many days were pursued by Fionn, who at last overtook them, but was forced by the Fians to pardon the beloved hero. Meanwhile Fionn waited for his revenge. Knowing that it was one of Diarmaid's *geasa* never to hunt a wild boar, he invited him to the chase of the boar of Gulban. Diarmaid slew it, and Fionn then bade him measure its length with his foot. A bristle pierced his heel, and he fell down in agony, beseeching Fionn to bring him water in his hand, for if he did this he would heal him. In spite of repeated appeals, Fionn, after bringing the water, let it drip from his hands. Diarmaid's brave soul passed away, and on Fionn's character this dire blot was fixed for ever.<sup>460</sup>

Other tales relate how several of the Fians were spirited away to the Land beyond the Seas, how they were rescued, how Diarmaid went to Land under Waves, and how Fionn and his men were entrapped in a Fairy Palace. Of greater importance are those which tell the end of the Fian band. This, according to the annalists, was the result of their exactions and demands. Fionn was told by his wife, a wise woman, never to drink out of a horn, but coming one day thirsty to a well, he forgot this tabu, and so brought the end

near. He encountered the sons of Uirgrenn, whom he had slain, and in the fight with them he fell.<sup>461</sup> Soon after were fought several battles, culminating in that of Gabhra in which all but a few Fians perished. Among the survivors were Oisín and Caoilte, who lingered on until the coming of S. Patrick. Caoilte remained on earth, but Oisín, whose mother was of the *síd* folk, went to fairyland for a time, ultimately returning and joining S. Patrick's company.<sup>462</sup> But a different version is given in the eighteenth century poem of Michael Comyn, undoubtedly based on popular tales. Oisín met the Queen of Tir na n-Og and went with her to fairyland, where time passed as a dream until one day he stood on a stone against which she had warned him. He saw his native land and was filled with home-sickness. The queen tried to dissuade him, but in vain. Then she gave him a horse, warning him not to set foot on Irish soil. He came to Ireland; and found it all changed. Some puny people were trying in vain to raise a great stone, and begged the huge stranger to help them. He sprang from his horse and flung the stone from its resting-place. But when he turned, his horse was gone, and he had become a decrepit old man. Soon after he met S. Patrick and related the tale to him.

Of most of the tales preserved in twelfth to fifteenth century MSS. it may be said that in essence they come down to us from a remote antiquity, like stars pulsing their clear light out of the hidden depths of space. Many of them exist as folk-tales, often wild and weird in form, while some folk-tales have no literary parallels. Some are *Märchen* with members of the Fian band as heroes, and of these there are many European parallels. But it is not unlikely that, as in the case of the Cúchulainn cycle, the folk versions may be truer to the original forms of the saga than the rounded and polished literary versions. Whatever the Fians were in origin—gods, mythic heroes, or actual personages—it is probable that a short *Heldensage* was formed in early times. This slowly expanded, new tales were added, and existing *Märchen* formulæ were freely made use of by making their heroes the heroes of the saga. Then came the time when many of the tales were written down, while later they were adapted to a scheme of Irish history, the heroes becoming warriors of a definite historic period, or perhaps connected with

such warriors. But these heroes belonged to a timeless world, whose margins are "the shore of old romance," and it was as if they, who were not for an age but for all time, scorned to become the puppets of the page of history.

The earliest evidence of the attitude of the ecclesiastical world to these heroes is found in the *Agallamh na Senorach*, or "Colloquy of the Ancients."<sup>463</sup> This may have been composed in the thirteenth century, and its author knew scores of Fionn legends. Making use of the tradition that Caoilte and Oisín had met S. Patrick, he makes Caoilte relate many of the tales, usually in connection with some place-name of Fian origin. The saint and his followers are amazed at the huge stature of the Fians, but Patrick asperges them with holy water, and hosts of demons flee from them. At each tale which Caoilte tells, the saint says, "Success and benediction, Caoilte. All this is to us a recreation of spirit and of mind, were it only not a destruction of devotion and a dereliction of prayer." But presently his guardian angel appears, and bids him not only listen to the tales but cause them to be written down. He and his attendant clerics now lend a willing ear to the recital and encourage the narrator with their applause. Finally, baptism is administered to Caoilte and his men, and by Patrick's intercessions Caoilte's relations and Fionn himself are brought out of hell. In this work the representatives of paganism are shown to be on terms of friendliness with the representatives of Christianity.

But in Highland ballads collected in the sixteenth century by the Dean of Lismore, as well as in Irish ballads found in MSS. dating from the seventeenth century onwards, the saint is a sour and intolerant cleric, and the Fians are equally intolerant and blasphemous pagans. There is no attempt at compromise; the saint rejoices that the Fian band are in hell, and Oisín throws contempt on the God of the shaven priests. But sometimes this contempt is mingled with humour and pathos. Were the heroes of Oisín's band now alive, scant work would be made of the monks' bells, books, and psalm-singing. It is true that the saint gives the weary old man hospitality, but Oisín's eyes are blinded with tears as he thinks of the departed glories of the Fians, and his ears are tormented "by jangling bells, droning psalms,

and howling clerics." These ballads probably represent one main aspect of the attitude of the Church to Celtic paganism. How, then, did the more generous *Colloquy* come into being? We must note first that some of the ballads have a milder tone. Oisín is urged to accept the faith, and he prays for salvation. Probably these represent the beginning of a reaction in favour of the old heroes, dating from a time when the faith was well established. There was no danger of a pagan revival, and, provided the Fians were Christianised, it might be legitimate to represent them as heroic and noble. The *Colloquy* would represent the high-water mark of this reaction among the lettered classes, for among the folk, to judge by popular tales, the Fians had never been regarded in other than a favourable light. The *Colloquy* re-established the dignity of the Fian band in the eyes of official Christianity. They are baptized or released from hell, and in their own nature they are virtuous and follow lofty ideals. "Who or what was it that maintained you in life?" asks Patrick. And Caoilte gives the noble reply, "Truth that was in our hearts, and strength in our arms, and fulfilment in our tongues." Patrick says of Fionn: "He was a king, a seer, a poet, a lord with a manifold and great train; our magician, our knowledgeable one, our soothsayer; all whatsoever he said was sweet with him. Excessive, perchance, as ye deem my testimony of Fionn, although ye hold that which I say to be overstrained, nevertheless, and by the King that is above me, he was three times better still." Not only so, but Caoilte maintains that Fionn and his men were aware of the existence of the true God. They possessed the *anima naturaliter Christiana*. The growing appreciation of a wider outlook on life, and possibly acquaintance with the romances of chivalry, made the composition of the *Colloquy* possible, but, again, it may represent a more generous conception of paganism existing from the time of the first encounter of Christianity with it in Ireland.

The strife of creeds in Ireland, the old order changing, giving place to new, had evidently impressed itself on the minds of Celtic poets and romancers. It suggested itself to them as providing an excellent "situation"; hence we constantly hear of the meeting of gods, demigods, or heroes with the saints of the new era. Frequently they bow before the Cross, they are

baptized and receive the Christian verity, as in the *Colloquy* and in some documents of the Cúchulainn cycle. Probably no other European folk-literature so takes advantage of just this situation, this meeting of creeds, one old and ready to vanish away, the other with all the buoyant freshness of youth.

Was MacPherson's a genuine Celtic epic unearthed by him and by no one else? No mortal eye save his has ever seen the original, but no one who knows anything of the contents of the saga can deny that much of his work is based on materials collected by him. He knew some of the tales and ballads current among the folk, possibly also some of the Irish MS. versions. He saw that there was a certain unity among them, and he saw that it was possible to make it more evident still. He fitted the floating incidents into an epic framework, adding, inventing, altering, and moulding the whole into an English style of his own. Later he seems to have translated the whole into Gaelic. He gave his version to the world, and found himself famous, but he gave it as the genuine translation of a genuine Celtic epic. Here was his craft; here he was the "charlatan of genius." His genius lay in producing an epic which people were willing to read, and in making them believe it to be not his work but that of the Celtic heroic age. Any one can write an epic, but few can write one which thousands will read, which men like Chateaubriand, Goethe, Napoleon, Byron, and Coleridge will admire and love, and which will, as it were, crystallise the aspirations of an age weary with classical formalism. MacPherson introduced his readers to a new world of heroic deeds, romantic adventure, deathless love, exquisite sentiments sentimentally expressed. He changed the rough warriors and beautiful but somewhat unabashed heroines of the saga into sentimental personages, who suited the taste of an age poised between the bewigged and powdered formalism of the eighteenth century, and the outburst of new ideals which was to follow. His *Ossian* is a cross between Pope's *Homer* and Byron's *Childe Harold*. His heroes and heroines are not on their native heath, and are uncertain whether to mince and strut with Pope or to follow nature with Rousseau's noble savages and Saint Pierre's Paul and Virginia. The time has gone when it was heresy to cast doubt upon the genuineness



of MacPherson's epic, but if any one is still doubtful, let him read it and then turn to the existing versions, ballads, and tales. He will find himself in a totally different atmosphere, and will recognise in the latter the true epic note—the warrior's rage and the warrior's generosity, dire cruelty yet infinite tenderness, wild lust yet also true love, a world of magic supernaturalism, but an exact copy of things as they were in that far-off age. The barbarism of the time is in these old tales—deeds which make one shiver, customs regarding the relations of the sexes now found only among savages, social and domestic arrangements which are somewhat lurid and disgusting. And yet, withal, the note of bravery, of passion, of authentic life is there; we are held in the grip of genuine manhood and womanhood. MacPherson gives a picture of the Ossianic age as he conceived it, an age of Celtic history that "never was on sea or land." Even his ghosts are un-Celtic, misty and unsubstantial phantasms, unlike the embodied *revenants* of the saga which are in agreement with the Celtic belief that the soul assumed a body in the other world. MacPherson makes Fionn invariably successful, but in the saga tales he is often defeated. He mingles the Cúchulainn and Ossianic cycles, but these, save in a few casual instances, are quite distinct in the old literature. Yet had not his poem been so great as it is, though so un-Celtic, it could not have influenced all European literature. But those who care for genuine Celtic literature, the product of a people who loved nature, romance, doughty deeds, the beauty of the world, the music of the sea and the birds, the mountains, valour in men, beauty in women, will find all these in the saga, whether in its literary or its popular forms. And through it all sounds the undertone of Celtic pathos and melancholy, the distant echo

"Of old unhappy, far-off things  
And battles long ago."

[454.](#) See Joyce, *OCR* 447.

[455.](#) Montelius, *Les Temps Préhistoriques*, 57, 151; Reinach, *RC* xxi. 8.

[456.](#) The popular versions of this early part of the saga differ much in detail, but follow the main outlines in much the same way. See Curtin, *HTI* 204; Campbell, *LF* 33 f.; *WHT* iii. 348.

[457.](#) In a widespread group of tales supernatural knowledge is obtained by eating part of some animal, usually a certain snake. In many of these tales the food is eaten by another person than he who obtained it, as in the case of Fionn. Cf. the Welsh story of Gwion, p. 116, and the Scandinavian of Sigurd, and other parallels in Miss Cox, *Cinderella*, 496; Frazer, *Arch. Rev.* i. 172 f. The story is thus a folk-tale formula applied to Fionn, doubtless because it harmonised with Celtic or pre-Celtic totemistic ideas. But it is based on ancient ideas regarding the supernatural knowledge possessed by reptiles or fish, and among American Indians, Maoris, Solomon Islanders, and others there are figured representations of a man holding such an animal, its tongue being attached to his tongue. He is a *shaman*, and American Indians believe that his inspiration comes from the tongue of a mysterious river otter, caught by him. See Dall, *Bureau of Ethnol.* 3rd report; and Miss Buckland, *Jour. Anth. Inst.* xxii. 29.

[458.](#) *TOS* iv.; O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 396; Joyce, *OCR* 194, 339.

[459.](#) For ballad versions see Campbell, *LF* 198.

[460.](#) Numerous ballad versions are given in Campbell *LF* 152 f. The tale is localised in various parts of Ireland and the Highlands, many dolmens in Ireland being known as Diarmaid and Grainne's beds.

[461.](#) For an account differing from this annalistic version, see *ZCP* i. 465.

[462.](#) O'Grady, ii. 102. This, on the whole, agrees with the Highland ballad version, *LF* 198.

[463.](#) *IT* iv.; O'Grady, *Silva Gad.* text and translation.

# Gods and Men

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Though man usually makes his gods in his own image, they are unlike as well as like him. Intermediate between them and man are ideal heroes whose parentage is partly divine, and who may themselves have been gods. One mark of the Celtic gods is their great stature. No house could contain Bran, and certain divine people of Elysium who appeared to Fionn had rings "as thick as a three-ox goad."<sup>464</sup> Even the Fians are giants, and the skull of one of them could contain several men. The gods have also the attribute of invisibility, and are only seen by those to whom they wish to disclose themselves, or they have the power of concealing themselves in a magic mist. When they appear to mortals it is usually in mortal guise, sometimes in the form of a particular person, but they can also transform themselves into animal shapes, often that of birds. The animal names of certain divinities show that they had once been animals pure and simple, but when they became anthropomorphic, myths would arise telling how they had appeared to men in these animal shapes. This, in part, accounts for these transformation myths. The gods are also immortal, though in myth we hear of their deaths. The Tuatha Dé Danann are "unfading," their "duration is perennial."<sup>465</sup> This immortality is sometimes an inherent quality; sometimes it is the result of eating immortal food—Manannan's swine, Goibniu's feast of age and his immortal ale, or the apples of Elysium. The stories telling of the deaths of the gods in the annalists may be based on old myths in which they were said to die, these myths being connected with ritual acts in which the human representatives of gods were slain. Such rites were an inherent part of Celtic religion. Elsewhere the ritual of gods like Osiris or Adonis, based on their functions as gods of vegetation, was connected with elaborate myths telling of their death and revival. Something akin to this may have occurred among the Celts.

The divinities often united with mortals. Goddesses sought the love of heroes who were then sometimes numbered among the gods, and gods had

amours with the daughters of men.<sup>466</sup> Frequently the heroes of the sagas are children of a god or goddess and a mortal,<sup>467</sup> and this divine parentage was firmly believed in by the Celts, since personal names formed of a divine name and *-genos* or *-gnatos*, "born of," "son of," are found in inscriptions over the whole Celtic area, or in Celtic documents—*Boduogenos*, *Camulognata*, etc. Those who first bore these names were believed to be of divine descent on one side. Spirits of nature or the elements of nature personified might also be parents of mortals, as a name like *Morgen*, from *Morigenos*, "Son of the Sea," and many others suggest. For this and for other reasons the gods frequently interfere in human affairs, assisting their children or their favourites. Or, again, they seek the aid of mortals or of the heroes of the sagas in their conflicts or in time of distress, as when Morrigan besought healing from Cúchulainn.

As in the case of early Greek and Roman kings, Celtic kings who bore divine names were probably believed to be representatives or incarnations of gods. Perhaps this explains why a chief of the Boii called himself a god and was revered after his death, and why the Gauls so readily accepted the divinity of Augustus. Irish kings bear divine names, and of these Nuada occurs frequently, one king, Irél Fáith, being identified with Nuada Airgetlam, while in one text *nuadat* is glossed *in rí*, "of the king," as if *Nuada* had come to be a title meaning "king." Welsh kings bear the name Nudd (Nodons), and both the actual and the mythic leader Brennus took their name from the god Bran. King Conchobar is called *día talmaide*, "a terrestrial god." If kings were thought to be god-men like the Pharaohs, this might account for the frequency of tales about divine fatherhood or reincarnation, while it would also explain the numerous *geasa* which Irish kings must observe, unlike ordinary mortals. Prosperity was connected with their observance, though this prosperity was later thought to depend on the king's goodness. The nature of the prosperity—mild seasons, abundant crops, fruit, fish, and cattle—shows that the king was associated with fertility, like the gods of growth.<sup>468</sup> Hence they had probably been once regarded as incarnations of such gods. Wherever divine kings are found, fertility is bound up with them and with the due observance of their tabus.

To prevent misfortune to the land, they are slain before they grow old and weak, and their vigour passes on to their successors. Their death benefits their people.<sup>469</sup> But frequently the king might reign as long as he could hold his own against all comers, or, again, a slave or criminal was for a time treated as a mock king, and slain as the divine king's substitute. Scattered hints in Irish literature and in folk survivals show that some such course as this had been pursued by the Celts with regard to their divine kings, as it was also elsewhere.<sup>470</sup> It is not impossible that some at least of the Druids stood in a similar relation to the gods. Kings and priests were probably at first not differentiated. In Galatia twelve "tetrarchs" met annually with three hundred assistants at Drunemeton as the great national council.<sup>471</sup> This council at a consecrated place (*nemeton*), its likeness to the annual Druidic gathering in Gaul, and the possibility that *Dru-* has some connection with the name "Druid," point to a religious as well as political aspect of this council. The "tetrarchs" may have been a kind of priest-kings; they had the kingly prerogative of acting as judges as had the Druids of Gaul. The wife of one of them was a priestess,<sup>472</sup> the office being hereditary in her family, and it may have been necessary that her husband should also be a priest. One tetrarch, Deiotarus, "divine bull," was skilled in augury, and the priest-kingship of Pessinus was conferred on certain Celts in the second century B.C., as if the double office were already a Celtic institution.<sup>473</sup> Mythic Celtic kings consulted the gods without any priestly intervention, and Queen Boudicca had priestly functions.<sup>474</sup> Without giving these hints undue emphasis, we may suppose that the differentiation of the two offices would not be simultaneous over the Celtic area. But when it did take effect priests would probably lay claim to the prerogatives of the priest-king as incarnate god. Kings were not likely to give these up, and where they retained them priests would be content with seeing that the tabus and ritual and the slaying of the mock king were duly observed. Irish kings were perhaps still regarded as gods, though certain Druids may have been divine priests, since they called themselves creators of the universe, and both continental and Irish Druids claimed superiority to kings. Further, the name (*semnotheoi*),

applied along with the name "Druids" to Celtic priests, though its meaning is obscure, points to divine pretensions on their part.<sup>475</sup>

The incarnate god was probably representative of a god or spirit of earth, growth, or vegetation, represented also by a tree. A symbolic branch of such a tree was borne by kings, and perhaps by Druids, who used oak branches in their rites.<sup>476</sup> King and tree would be connected, the king's life being bound up with that of the tree, and perhaps at one time both perished together. But as kings were represented by a substitute, so the sacred tree, regarded as too sacred to be cut down, may also have had its *succedaneum*. The Irish *bile* or sacred tree, connected with the kings, must not be touched by any impious hand, and it was sacrilege to cut it down.<sup>477</sup> Probably before cutting down the tree a branch or something growing upon it, e.g. mistletoe, had to be cut, or the king's symbolic branch secured before he could be slain. This may explain Pliny's account of the mistletoe rite. The mistletoe or branch was the soul of the tree, and also contained the life of the divine representative. It must be plucked before the tree could be cut down or the victim slain. Hypothetical as this may be, Pliny's account is incomplete, or he is relating something of which all the details were not known to him. The rite must have had some other purpose than that of the magico-medical use of the mistletoe which he describes, and though he says nothing of cutting down the tree or slaying a human victim, it is not unlikely that, as human sacrifice had been prohibited in his time, the oxen which were slain during the rite took the place of the latter. Later romantic tales suggest that, before slaying some personage, the mythico-romantic survivor of a divine priest or king, a branch carried by him had to be captured by his assailant, or plucked from the tree which he defended.<sup>478</sup> These may point to an old belief in tree and king as divine representatives, and to a ritual like that associated with the Priest of Nemi. The divine tree became the mystic tree of Elysium, with gold and silver branches and marvellous fruits. Armed with such a branch, the gift of one of its people, mortals might penetrate unhindered to the divine land. Perhaps they may be regarded as romantic forms of the old divine kings with the branch of the divine tree.

If in early times the spirit of vegetation was feminine, her representative would be a woman, probably slain at recurring festivals by the female worshippers. This would explain the slaying of one of their number at a festival by Namnite women. But when male spirits or gods superseded goddesses, the divine priest-king would take the place of the female representative. On the other hand, just as the goddess became the consort of the god, a female representative would continue as the divine bride in the ritual of the sacred marriage, the May Queen of later folk-custom. Sporadically, too, conservatism would retain female cults with female divine incarnations, as is seen by the presence of the May Queen alone in certain folk-survivals, and by many Celtic rituals from which men were excluded.<sup>479</sup>

<sup>464</sup>. O'Grady, ii. 228.

<sup>465</sup>. *Ibid.* ii. 203. Cf. Cæsar, vi. 14, "the immortal gods" of Gaul.

<sup>466</sup>. Cf. Ch. XXIV.; O'Grady, ii. 110, 172; Nutt-Meyer, i. 42.

<sup>467</sup>. Leahy, ii. 6.

<sup>468</sup>. *IT* iii. 203; *Trip. Life*, 507; *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 14; *RC* xxii. 28, 168. Chiefs as well as kings probably influenced fertility. A curious survival of this is found in the belief that herrings abounded in Dunvegan Loch when MacLeod arrived at his castle there, and in the desire of the people in Skye during the potato famine that his fairy banner should be waved.

<sup>469</sup>. An echo of this may underlie the words attributed to King Ailill, "If I am slain, it will be the redemption of many" (O'Grady, ii. 416).

<sup>470</sup>. See Frazer, *Kingship*; Cook, *Folk-Lore*, 1906, "The European Sky-God." Mr. Cook gives ample evidence for the existence of Celtic incarnate gods. With his main conclusions I agree, though some of his inferences seem far-fetched. The divine king was, in his view, a sky-god; he was more likely to have been the representative of a god or spirit of growth or vegetation.

<sup>471</sup>. Strabo, xii. 5. 2.

<sup>472</sup>. Plutarch, *de Virt. Mul.* 20.

<sup>473</sup>. Cicero, *de Div.* i. 15, ii. 36; Strabo, xii. 5. 3; Stachelin, *Gesch. der Kleinasien. Galater.*

<sup>474</sup>. Livy, v. 34; Dio Cass. lxii. 6.

<sup>475</sup>. *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, i. 22; Diog. Laert. i. proem 1; see p. 301, *infra*.

<sup>476</sup>. Pliny, xvi. 95.

<sup>477</sup>. P. 201, *infra*.

[478.](#) Cf. the tales of Gawain and the Green Knight with his holly bough, and of Gawain's attempting to pluck the bough of a tree guarded by Gramoplanz (Weston, *Legend of Sir Gawain*, 22, 86). Cf. also the tale of Diarmaid's attacking the defender of a tree to obtain its fruit, and the subsequent slaughter of each man who attacks the hero hidden in its branches (*TOS* vol. iii.). Cf. Cook, *Folk-Lore*, xvii. 441.

[479.](#) See Chap. XVIII.



# The Cult of the Dead

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The custom of burying grave-goods with the dead, or slaying wife or slaves on the tomb, does not necessarily point to a cult of the dead, yet when such practices survive over a long period they assume the form of a cult. These customs flourished among the Celts, and, taken in connection with the reverence for the sepulchres of the dead, they point to a worship of ancestral spirits as well as of great departed heroes. Heads of the slain were offered to the "strong shades"—the ghosts of tribal heroes whose praises were sung by bards.<sup>480</sup> When such heads were placed on houses, they may have been devoted to the family ghosts. The honour in which mythic or real heroes were held may point to an actual cult, the hero being worshipped when dead, while he still continued his guardianship of the tribe. We know also that the tomb of King Cottius in the Alps was a sacred place, that Irish kings were often inaugurated on ancestral burial cairns, and that Irish gods were associated with barrows of the dead.<sup>481</sup>

The cult of the dead culminated at the family hearth, around which the dead were even buried, as among the Aeduii; this latter custom may have been general.<sup>482</sup> In any case the belief in the presence of ancestral ghosts around the hearth was widespread, as existing superstitions show. In Brittany the dead seek warmth at the hearth by night, and a feast is spread for them on All Souls' eve, or crumbs are left for them after a family gathering.<sup>483</sup> But generally the family ghost has become a brownie, lutin, or pooka, haunting the hearth and doing the household work.<sup>484</sup> Fairy corresponds in all respects to old ancestral ghost, and the one has succeeded to the place of the other, while the fairy is even said to be the ghost of a dead person.<sup>485</sup> Certain archæological remains have also a connection with this ancient cult. Among Celtic remains in Gaul are found andirons of clay, ornamented with a ram's head. M. Dechelette sees in this "the symbol of sacrifice offered to the souls of ancestors on the altar of the hearth."<sup>486</sup> The ram was already associated as a sacrificial animal with the cult of fire on

the hearth, and by an easy transition it was connected with the cult of the dead there. It is found as an emblem on ancient tombs, and the domestic Lar was purified by the immolation of a ram.<sup>487</sup> Figurines of a ram have been found in Gaulish tombs, and it is associated with the god of the underworld.<sup>488</sup> The ram of the andirons was thus a permanent representative of the victim offered in the cult of the dead. A mutilated inscription on one of them may stand for *Laribus augustis*, and certain markings on others may represent the garlands twined round the victim.<sup>489</sup> Serpents with rams' heads occur on the monuments of the underworld god. The serpent was a chthonian god or the emblem of such a god, and it may have been thought appropriate to give it the head of an animal associated with the cult of the dead.

The dead were also fed at the grave or in the house. Thus cups were placed in the recess of a well in the churchyard of Kilranelagh by those interring a child under five, and the ghost of the child was supposed to supply the other spirits with water from these cups.<sup>490</sup> In Ireland, after a death, food is placed out for the spirits, or, at a burial, nuts are placed in the coffin.<sup>491</sup> In some parts of France, milk is poured out on the grave, and both in Brittany and in Scotland the dead are supposed to partake of the funeral feast.<sup>492</sup> These are survivals from pagan times and correspond to the rites in use among those who still worship ancestors. In Celtic districts a cairn or a cross is placed over the spot where a violent or accidental death has occurred, the purpose being to appease the ghost, and a stone is often added to the cairn by all passers-by.<sup>493</sup>

Festivals were held in Ireland on the anniversaries of the death of kings or chiefs, and these were also utilised for purposes of trade, pleasure, or politics. They sometimes occurred on the great festivals, *e.g.* Lughnasad and Samhain, and were occasionally held at the great burial-places.<sup>494</sup> Thus the gathering at Tailtiu on Lughnasad was said to have been founded by Lug in memory of his foster-mother, Tailtiu, and the Leinstermen met at Carman on the same day to commemorate King Garman, or in a variant account, a woman called Carman. She and her sons had tried to blight the corn of the

Tuatha Dé Danann, but the sons were driven off and she died of grief, begging that a fair should always be held in her name, and promising abundance of milk, fruit, and fish for its observance.<sup>495</sup> These may be ætiological myths explaining the origin of these festivals on the analogy of funeral festivals, but more likely, since Lughnasad was a harvest festival, they are connected with the custom of slaying a representative of the corn-spirit. The festival would become a commemoration of all such victims, but when the custom itself had ceased it would be associated with one particular personage, the corn-goddess regarded as a mortal.

This would be the case where the victim was a woman, but where a male was slain, the analogy of the slaying of the divine king or his *succedaneum* would lead to the festivals being regarded as commemorative of a king, e.g. Garman. This agrees with the statement that observance of the festival produced plenty; non-observance, dearth. The victims were slain to obtain plenty, and the festival would also commemorate those who had died for this good cause, while it would also appease their ghosts should these be angry at their violent deaths. Certain of the dead were thus commemorated at Lughnasad, a festival of fertility. Both the corn-spirit or divinity slain in the reaping of the corn, and the human victims, were appeased by its observance.<sup>496</sup> The legend of Carman makes her hostile to the corn—a curious way of regarding a corn-goddess. But we have already seen that gods of fertility were sometimes thought of as causing blight, and in folk-belief the corn-spirit is occasionally believed to be dangerous. Such inversions occur wherever revolutions in religion take place.

The great commemoration of the dead was held on Samhain eve, a festival intended to aid the dying powers of vegetation, whose life, however, was still manifested in evergreen shrubs, in the mistletoe, in the sheaf of corn from last harvest—the abode of the corn-spirit.<sup>497</sup> Probably, also, human representatives of the vegetation or corn-spirit were slain, and this may have suggested the belief in the presence of their ghosts at this festival. Or the festival being held at the time of the death of vegetation, the dead would naturally be commemorated then. Or, as in Scandinavia, they may have been held to have an influence on fertility, as an extension of the

belief that certain slain persons represented spirits of fertility, or because trees and plants growing on the barrows of the dead were thought to be tenanted by their spirits.<sup>498</sup> In Scandinavia, the dead were associated with female spirits or *fylgjur*, identified with the *disir*, a kind of earth-goddesses, living in hollow hills.<sup>499</sup> The nearest Celtic analogy to these is the *Matres*, goddesses of fertility. Bede says that Christmas eve was called *Modranicht*, "Mothers' Night,"<sup>500</sup> and as many of the rites of Samhain were transferred to Yule, the former date of *Modranicht* may have been Samhain, just as the Scandinavian *Disablot*, held in November, was a festival of the *disir* and of the dead.<sup>501</sup> It has been seen that the Celtic Earth-god was lord of the dead, and that he probably took the place of an Earth-goddess or goddesses, to whom the *Matres* certainly correspond. Hence the connection of the dead with female Earth-spirits would be explained. Mother Earth had received the dead before her place was taken by the Celtic Dispater. Hence the time of Earth's decay was the season when the dead, her children, would be commemorated. Whatever be the reason, Celts, Teutons, and others have commemorated the dead at the beginning of winter, which was the beginning of a new year, while a similar festival of the dead at New Year is held in many other lands.

Both in Ireland and in Brittany, on November eve food is laid out for the dead who come to visit the houses and to warm themselves at the fire in the stillness of the night, and in Brittany a huge log burns on the hearth. We have here returned to the cult of the dead at the hearth.<sup>502</sup> Possibly the Yule log was once a log burned on the hearth—the place of the family ghosts—at Samhain, when new fire was kindled in each house. On it libations were poured, which would then have been meant for the dead. The Yule log and the log of the Breton peasants would thus be the domestic aspect of the fire ritual, which had its public aspect in the Samhain bonfires.

All this has been in part affected by the Christian feast of All Souls. Dr. Frazer thinks that the feast of All Saints (November 1st) was intended to take the place of the pagan cult of the dead. As it failed to do this, All Souls, a festival of all the dead, was added on November 2nd.<sup>503</sup> To some extent, but not entirely, it has neutralised the pagan rites, for the old ideas

connected with Samhain still survive here and there. It is also to be noted that in some cases the friendly aspect of the dead has been lost sight of, and, like the *síd*-folk, they are popularly connected with evil powers which are in the ascendant on Samhain eve.

[480.](#) Silius Italicus, v. 652; Lucan, i. 447. Cf. p. 241, *infra*.

[481.](#) Ammian. Marcell. xv. 10. 7; Joyce, *SH* i. 45.

[482.](#) Bulliot, *Fouilles du Mont Beuvray*, Autun, 1899, i. 76, 396.

[483.](#) Le Braz, ii. 67; Sauv , *Folk-lore des Hautes Vosges*, 295; B renger-F raud, *Superstitions et Survivances*, i. 11.

[484.](#) Hearn, *Aryan Household*, 43 f.; B renger-F raud, i. 33; *Rev. des Trad.* i. 142; Carmichael, ii. 329; Cosquin, *Trad. Pop. de la Lorraine*, i. 82.

[485.](#) Kennedy, 126. The mischievous brownie who overturns furniture and smashes crockery is an exact reproduction of the Poltergeist.

[486.](#) Dechelette, *Rev. Arch.* xxxiii, (1898), 63, 245, 252.

[487.](#) Cicero, *De Leg.* ii. 22.

[488.](#) Dechelette, 256; Reinach, *BF* 189.

[489.](#) Dechelette, 257-258. In another instance the ram is marked with crosses like those engraved on images of the underworld god with the hammer.

[490.](#) Kennedy, 187.

[491.](#) Lady Wilde, 118; Curtin, *Tales*, 54.

[492.](#) Le Braz, i. 229; Gregor, 21; Cambry, *Voyage dans le Finist re*, i. 229.

[493.](#) Le Braz, ii. 47; *Folk-Lore*, iv. 357; MacCulloch, *Misty Isle of Skye*, 254; S billot, i. 235-236.

[494.](#) Names of places associated with the great festivals are also those of the chief pagan cemeteries, Tara, Carman, Taillti, etc. (O'Curry, *MC* ii. 523).

[495.](#) *Rennes Dindsenchas*, *RC* xv. 313-314.

[496.](#) Cf. Frazer, *Adonis*, 134.

[497.](#) Cf. Chambers, *Medi eval Stage*, i. 250, 253.

[498.](#) See Vigfusson-Powell, *Corpus Poet. Boreale*, i. 405, 419. Perhaps for a similar reason a cult of the dead may have occurred at the Midsummer festival.

[499.](#) Miss Faraday, *Folk-Lore*, xvii. 398 f.

[500.](#) Bede, *de Temp. Rat.* c. xv.

[501.](#) Vigfusson-Powell, i. 419.

[502.](#) Curtin, *Tales*, 157; Haddon, *Folk-Lore*, iv. 359; Le Braz, ii. 115 *et passim*.

[503.](#) Frazer, *Adonis*, 253 f.

# Primitive Nature Worship

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In early thought everything was a person, in the loose meaning then possessed by personality, and many such "persons" were worshipped—earth, sun, moon, sea, wind, etc. This led later to more complete personification, and the sun or earth divinity or spirit was more or less separated from the sun or earth themselves. Some Celtic divinities were thus evolved, but there still continued a veneration of the objects of nature in themselves, as well as a cult of nature spirits or secondary divinities who peopled every part of nature. "Nor will I call out upon the mountains, fountains, or hills, or upon the rivers, which are now subservient to the use of man, but once were an abomination and destruction to them, and to which the blind people paid divine honours," cries Gildas.<sup>504</sup> This was the true cult of the folk, the "blind people," even when the greater gods were organised, and it has survived with modifications in out-of-the-way places, in spite of the coming of Christianity.

S. Kentigern rebuked the Cambrians for worshipping the elements, which God made for man's use.<sup>505</sup> The question of the daughters of Loegaire also throws much light on Celtic nature worship. "Has your god sons or daughters?... Have many fostered his sons? Are his daughters dear and beautiful to men? Is he in heaven or on earth, in the sea, in the rivers, in the mountains, in the valleys?"<sup>506</sup> The words suggest a belief in divine beings filling heaven, earth, sea, air, hills, glens, lochs, and rivers, and following human customs. A naïve faith, full of beauty and poetry, even if it had its dark and grim aspects! These powers or personalities had been invoked from time immemorial, but the invocations were soon stereotyped into definite formulas. Such a formula is put into the mouth of Amairgen, the poet of the Milesians, when they were about to invade Erin, and it may have been a magical invocation of the powers of nature at the beginning of an undertaking or in times of danger:

"I invoke the land of Ireland!  
Shining, shining sea!  
Fertile, fertile mountain!  
Wooded vale!  
Abundant river, abundant in waters!  
Fish abounding lake!  
Fish abounding sea!  
Fertile earth!  
Irruption of fish! Fish there!  
Bird under wave! Great fish!  
Crab hole! Irruption of fish!  
Fish abounding sea!"<sup>507</sup>

A similar formula was spoken after the destruction of Da Derga's Hostel by MacCecht on his finding water. He bathed in it and sang—

"Cold fountain! Surface of strand ...  
Sea of lake, water of Gara, stream of river;  
High spring well; cold fountain!"<sup>508</sup>

The goddess Morrigan, after the defeat of the Fomorians, invokes the powers of nature and proclaims the victory to "the royal mountains of Ireland, to its chief waters, and its river mouths."<sup>509</sup> It was also customary to take oaths by the elements—heaven, earth, sun, fire, moon, sea, land, day, night, etc., and these punished the breaker of the oath.<sup>510</sup> Even the gods exacted such an oath of each other. Bres swore by sun, moon, sea, and land, to fulfil the engagement imposed on him by Lug.<sup>511</sup> The formulæ survived into Christian times, and the faithful were forbidden to call the sun and moon gods or to swear by them, while in Breton folk-custom at the present day oaths by sun, moon, or earth, followed by punishment of the oath-breaker by the moon, are still in use.<sup>512</sup> These oaths had originated in a time when the elements themselves were thought to be divine, and similar adjurations were used by Greeks and Scandinavians.



While the greater objects of nature were worshipped for themselves alone, the Celts also peopled the earth with spirits, benevolent or malevolent, of rocks, hills, dales, forests, lakes, and streams,<sup>513</sup> and while greater divinities of growth had been evolved, they still believed in lesser spirits of vegetation, of the corn, and of fertility, connected, however, with these gods. Some of these still survive as fairies seen in meadows, woodlands, or streams, or as demoniac beings haunting lonely places. And even now, in French folk-belief, sun, moon, winds, etc., are regarded as actual personages. Sun and moon are husband and wife; the winds have wives; they are addressed by personal names and revered.<sup>514</sup> Some spirits may already have had a demoniac aspect in pagan times. The Tuatha Déa conjured up *meisi*, "spectral bodies that rise from the ground," against the Milesians, and at their service were malignant sprites—*urtrochta*, and "forms, spectres, and great queens" called *guidemain* (false demons). The Druids also sent forth mischievous spirits called *siabra*. In the *Táin* there are references to *bocânachs*, *banânaichs*, and *geniti-glinni*, "goblins, eldritch beings, and glen-folk."<sup>515</sup> These are twice called Tuatha Dé Danann, and this suggests that they were nature-spirits akin to the greater gods.<sup>516</sup> The *geniti-glinni* would be spirits haunting glen and valley. They are friendly to Cúchulainn in the *Táin*, but in the *Feast of Bricriu* he and other heroes fight and destroy them.<sup>517</sup> In modern Irish belief they are demons of the air, perhaps fallen angels.<sup>518</sup>

Much of this is probably pre-Celtic as well as Celtic, but it held its ground because it was dear to the Celts themselves. They upheld the aboriginal cults resembling those which, in the lands whence they came, had been native and local with themselves. Such cults are as old as the world, and when Christianity expelled the worship of the greater gods, younger in growth, the ancient nature worship, dowered with immortal youth,

"bowed low before the blast  
In patient deep disdain,"

to rise again in vigour. Preachers, councils, and laws inveighed against it. The old rites continued to be practised, or survived under a Christian dress and colouring. They are found in Breton villages, in Highland glens, in Welsh and Cornish valleys, in Irish townships, and only the spread of school-board education, with its materialism and uninviting common sense, is forcing them at last to yield.

The denunciations of these cults throw some light upon them. Offerings at trees, stones, fountains, and cross-roads, the lighting of fires or candles there, and vows or incantations addressed to them, are forbidden, as is also the worship of trees, groves, stones, rivers, and wells. The sun and moon are not to be called lords. Wizardry, and divination, and the leapings and dancings, songs and choruses of the pagans, *i.e.* their orgiastic cults, are not to be practised. Tempest-raisers are not to ply their diabolical craft.<sup>519</sup> These denunciations, of course, were not without their effect, and legend told how the spirits of nature were heard bewailing the power of the Christian saints, their mournful cries echoing in wooded hollows, secluded valleys, and shores of lake and river.<sup>520</sup> Their power, though limited, was not annihilated, but the secrecy in which the old cults often continued to be practised gave them a darker colour. They were identified with the works of the devil, and the spirits of paganism with dark and grisly demons.<sup>521</sup> This culminated in the mediæval witch persecutions, for witchcraft was in part the old paganism in a new guise. Yet even that did not annihilate superstition, which still lives and flourishes among the folk, though the actual worship of nature-spirits has now disappeared.

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Perhaps the most important object in nature to the early Celts as to most primitive folk was the moon. The phases of the moon were apparent before men observed the solstices and equinoxes, and they formed an easy method of measuring time. The Celtic year was at first lunar—Pliny speaks of the Celtic method of counting the beginning of months and years by the moon—and night was supposed to precede day.<sup>522</sup> The festivals of growth began,

not at sunrise, but on the previous evening with the rising of the moon, and the name *La Lunade* is still given to the Midsummer festival in parts of France.<sup>523</sup> At Vallon de la Suille a wood on the slope where the festival is held is called *Bois de la Lune*; and in Ireland, where the festival begins on the previous evening, in the district where an ascent of Cnoc Aine is made, the position of the moon must be observed. A similar combination of sun and moon cults is found in an inscription at Lausanne—*To the genius of the sun and moon.*<sup>524</sup>

Possibly sun festivals took the place of those of the moon. Traces of the connection of the moon with agriculture occur in different regions, the connection being established through the primitive law of sympathetic magic. The moon waxes and wanes, therefore it must affect all processes of growth or decay. Dr. Frazer has cited many instances of this belief, and has shown that the moon had a priority to the sun in worship, *e.g.* in Egypt and Babylon.<sup>525</sup> Sowing is done with a waxing moon, so that, through sympathy, there may be a large increase. But harvesting, cutting timber, etc., should be done with a waning moon, because moisture being caused by a waxing moon, it was necessary to avoid cutting such things as would spoil by moisture at that time. Similar beliefs are found among the Celts. Mistletoe and other magical plants were culled with a waxing moon, probably because their power would thus be greater. Dr. Johnson noted the fact that the Highlanders sowed their seed with a waxing moon, in the expectation of a better harvest. For similar occult reasons, it is thought in Brittany that conception during a waxing moon produces a male child, during a waning moon a female, while *accouchements* at the latter time are dangerous. Sheep and cows should be killed at the new moon, else their flesh will shrink, but peats should be cut in the last quarter, otherwise they will remain moist and give out "a power of smoke."<sup>526</sup>

These ideas take us back to a time when it was held that the moon was not merely the measurer of time, but had powerful effects on the processes of growth and decay. Artemis and Diana, moon-goddesses, had power over all growing things, and as some Celtic goddesses were equated with Diana, they may have been connected with the moon, more especially as Gallo-

Roman images of Diana have the head adorned with a crescent moon. In some cases festivals of the moon remained intact, as among the Celtiberians and other peoples to the north of them, who at the time of full moon celebrated the festival of a nameless god, dancing all night before the doors of their houses.<sup>527</sup> The nameless god may have been the moon, worshipped at the time of her intensest light. Moonlight dances round a great stone, with singing, on the first day of the year, occurred in the Highlands in the eighteenth century.<sup>528</sup> Other survivals of cult are seen in the practices of bowing or baring the head at new moon, or addressing it with words of adoration or supplication. In Ireland, Camden found the custom at new moon of saying the Lord's Prayer with the addition of the words, "Leave us whole and sound as Thou hast found us." Similar customs exist in Brittany, where girls pray to the moon to grant them dreams of their future husbands.<sup>529</sup> Like other races, the Celts thought that eclipses were caused by a monster attacking the moon, while it could be driven off with cries and shouts. In 218 B.C. the Celtic allies of Attalus were frightened by an eclipse, and much later Christian legislation forbade the people to assemble at an eclipse and shout, *Vince, Luna!*<sup>530</sup> Such a practice was observed in Ireland in the seventeenth century. At an earlier time, Irish poets addressed sun and moon as divinities, and they were represented on altars even in Christian times.<sup>531</sup>

While the Celts believed in sea-gods—Manannan, Morgen, Dylan—the sea itself was still personified and regarded as divine. It was thought to be a hostile being, and high tides were met by Celtic warriors, who advanced against them with sword and spear, often perishing in the rushing waters rather than retreat. The ancients regarded this as bravado. M. Jullian sees in it a sacrifice by voluntary suicide; M. D'Arbois, a tranquil waiting for death and the introduction to another life.<sup>532</sup> But the passages give the sense of an actual attack on the waves—living things which men might terrify, and perhaps with this was combined the belief that no one could die during a rising tide. Similarly French fishermen threaten to cut a fog in two with a knife, while the legend of S. Lunaire tells how he threw a knife at a fog,

thus causing its disappearance.<sup>533</sup> Fighting the waves is also referred to in Irish texts. Thus Tuirbe Trágmar would "hurl a cast of his axe in the face of the flood-tide, so that he forbade the sea, which then would not come over the axe." Cúchulainn, in one of his fits of anger, fought the waves for seven days, and Fionn fought and conquered the Muireartach, a personification of the wild western sea.<sup>534</sup> On the French coast fishermen throw harpoons at certain harmful waves called the Three Witch Waves, thus drawing their blood and causing them to subside.<sup>535</sup> In some cases human victims may have been offered to the rising waters, since certain tales speak of a child set floating on the waves, and this, repeated every seven years, kept them in their place.<sup>536</sup>

The sea had also its beneficent aspects. The shore was "a place of revelation of science," and the sea sympathised with human griefs. At the Battle of Ventry "the sea chattered, telling the losses, and the waves raised a heavy, woeful great moan in wailing them."<sup>537</sup> In other cases in Ireland, by a spell put on the waves, or by the intuitive knowledge of the listener, it was revealed that they were wailing for a death or describing some distant event.<sup>538</sup> In the beautiful song sung by the wife of Cael, "the wave wails against the shore for his death," and in Welsh myth the waves bewailed the death of Dylan, "son of the wave," and were eager to avenge it. The noise of the waves rushing into the vale of Conwy were his dying groans.<sup>539</sup> In Ireland the roaring of the sea was thought to be prophetic of a king's death or the coming of important news; and there, too, certain great waves were celebrated in story—Clidna's, Tuaithe's, and Rudhraidhe's.<sup>540</sup> Nine waves, or the ninth wave, partly because of the sacred nature of the number nine, partly because of the beneficent character of the waves, had a great importance. They formed a barrier against invasion, danger, or pestilence, or they had a healing effect.<sup>541</sup>

The wind was also regarded as a living being whose power was to be dreaded. It punished King Loegaire for breaking his oath. But it was also personified as a god Vintius, equated with Pollux and worshipped by Celtic sailors, or with Mars, the war-god who, in his destructive aspect, was

perhaps regarded as the nearest analogue to a god of stormy winds.<sup>542</sup> Druids and Celtic priestesses claimed the power of controlling the winds, as did wizards and witches in later days. This they did, according to Christian writers, by the aid of demons, perhaps the old divinities of the air. Bishop Agobard describes how the *tempestarii* raised tempests which destroyed the fruits of the earth, and drew "aerial ships" from Magonia, whither the ships carried these fruits.<sup>543</sup> Magonia may be the upper air ruled over by a sky god Magounos or Mogounos, equated with Apollo.<sup>544</sup> The winds may have been his servants, ruled also by earthly magicians. Like Yahweh, as conceived by Hebrew poets, he "bringeth the winds out of his treasures," and "maketh lightnings with rain."

<sup>504</sup>. Gildas ii. 4.

<sup>505</sup>. Jocelyn, *Vila Kentig*. c. xxxii.

<sup>506</sup>. *Trip. Life*, 315.

<sup>507</sup>. *LL* 12b. The translation is from D'Arbois, ii. 250 f; cf. O'Curry, *MC* ii. 190.

<sup>508</sup>. *RC* xxii. 400.

<sup>509</sup>. *RC* xii. 109.

<sup>510</sup>. Petrie, *Tara*, 34; *RC* vi. 168; *LU* 118.

<sup>511</sup>. Joyce, *OCR* 50.

<sup>512</sup>. D'Achery, *Spicelegium*, v. 216; Sébillot, i. 16 f., 56, 211.

<sup>513</sup>. Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* ii. 10, speaks of the current belief in the divinity of waters, birds, and beasts.

<sup>514</sup>. Sébillot, i. 9, 35, 75, 247, etc.

<sup>515</sup>. Joyce, *SH* ii. 273; Cormac, 87; Stokes, *TIG* xxxiii., *RC* xv. 307.

<sup>516</sup>. Miss Hull, 170, 187, 193; *IT* i. 214; Leahy, i. 126.

<sup>517</sup>. *IT* i. 287.

<sup>518</sup>. Henderson, *Irish Texts*, ii. 210.

<sup>519</sup>. *Capit. Karoli Magni*, i. 62; *Leges Luitprand.* ii. 38; Canon 23, 2nd Coun. of Arles, Hefele, *Councils*, iii. 471; D'Achery, v. 215. Some of these attacks were made against Teutonic superstitions, but similar superstitions existed among the Celts.

<sup>520</sup>. See Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* ii. 498.

- [521.](#) A more tolerant note is heard, *e.g.*, in an Irish text which says that the spirits which appeared of old were divine ministrants not demoniacal, while angels helped the ancients because they followed natural truth. "Cormac's Sword," *IT* iii. 220-221. Cf. p. 152, *supra*.
- [522.](#) Cæsar, vi. 18; Pliny xxii. 14. Pliny speaks of culling mistletoe on the sixth day of the moon, which is to them the beginning of months and years (*sexta luna, quae principia*, etc.). This seems to make the sixth, not the first, day of the moon that from which the calculation was made. But the meaning is that mistletoe was culled on the sixth day of the moon, and that the moon was that by which months and years were measured. *Luna*, not *sexta luna*, is in apposition with *quae*. Traces of the method of counting by nights or by the moon survive locally in France, and the usage is frequent in Irish and Welsh literature. See my article "Calendar" (Celtic) in Hastings' *Encyclop. of Religion and Ethics*, iii. 78 f.
- [523.](#) Delocke, "La Procession dite La Lunade," *RC* ix. 425.
- [524.](#) Monnier, 174, 222; Fitzgerald, *RC* iv. 189.
- [525.](#) Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup>, ii. 154 f.
- [526.](#) Pliny, xvi. 45; Johnson, *Journey*, 183; Ramsay, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 449; Sébillot, i. 41 f.; MacCulloch, *Misty Isle of Skye*, 236. In Brittany it is thought that girls may conceive by the moon's power (*RC* iii. 452).
- [527.](#) Strabo, iii. 4. 16.
- [528.](#) Brand, s.v. "New Year's Day."
- [529.](#) Chambers, *Popular Rhymes*, 35; Sébillot, i. 46, 57 f.
- [530.](#) Polybius, v. 78; *Vita S. Eligii*, ii. 15.
- [531.](#) Osborne, *Advice to his Son* (1656), 79; *RC* xx. 419, 428.
- [532.](#) Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* iii. 77; *Eud. Eth.* iii. 1. 25; Stobæus, vii. 40; Ælian, xii. 22; Jullian, 54; D'Arbois, vi. 218.
- [533.](#) Sébillot, i. 119. The custom of throwing something at a "fairy eddy," *i.e.* a dust storm, is well known on Celtic ground and elsewhere.
- [534.](#) *Folk-Lore*, iv. 488; Curtin, *HTI* 324; Campbell, *The Fians*, 158. Fian warriors attacked the sea when told it was laughing at them.
- [535.](#) *Mélusine*, ii. 200.
- [536.](#) Sébillot, ii. 170.
- [537.](#) Meyer, *Cath. Finntraga*, 40.
- [538.](#) *RC* xvi. 9; *LB* 32b, 55.
- [539.](#) Meyer, *op. cit.* 55; Skene, i. 282, 288, 543; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 387.
- [540.](#) Meyer, 51; Joyce, *PN* i. 195, ii. 257; *RC* xv. 438.
- [541.](#) See p. 55, *supra*; *IT* i. 838, iii. 207; *RC* ii. 201, ix. 118.
- [542.](#) Holder, s.v. "Vintius."

[543.](#) Agobard, i. 146.

[544.](#) See Stokes, *RC* vi. 267.



# River and Well Worship

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Among the Celts the testimony of contemporary witnesses, inscriptions, votive offerings, and survivals, shows the importance of the cult of waters and of water divinities. Mr. Gomme argues that Celtic water-worship was derived from the pre-Celtic aborigines,<sup>545</sup> but if so, the Celts must have had a peculiar aptitude for it, since they were so enthusiastic in its observance. What probably happened was that the Celts, already worshippers of the waters, freely adopted local cults of water wherever they came. Some rivers or river-goddesses in Celtic regions seem to possess pre-Celtic names.<sup>546</sup>

Treasures were flung into a sacred lake near Toulouse to cause a pestilence to cease. Caepion, who afterwards fished up this treasure, fell soon after in battle—a punishment for cupidity, and *aurum Tolosanum* now became an expression for goods dishonestly acquired.<sup>547</sup> A yearly festival, lasting three days, took place at Lake Gévaudan. Garments, food, and wax were thrown into the waters, and animals were sacrificed. On the fourth day, it is said, there never failed to spring up a tempest of rain, thunder, and lightning—a strange reward for this worship of the lake.<sup>548</sup> S. Columba routed the spirits of a Scottish fountain which was worshipped as a god, and the well now became sacred, perhaps to the saint himself, who washed in it and blessed it so that it cured diseases.<sup>549</sup>

On inscriptions a river name is prefixed by some divine epithet—*dea*, *augusta*, and the worshipper records his gratitude for benefits received from the divinity or the river itself. Bormanus, Bormo or Borvo, Danuvius (the Danube), and Luxovius are found on inscriptions as names of river or fountain gods, but goddesses are more numerous—Acionna, Aventia, Bormana, Brixia, Carpundia, Clutoida, Divona, Sirona, Ura—well-nymphs; and Icauna (the Yonne), Matrona, and Sequana (the Seine)—river-goddesses.<sup>550</sup> No inscription to the goddess of a lake has yet been found. Some personal names like Dubrogenos (son of the Dubron), Enigenus (son of the Aenus), and the belief of Virдумarus that one of his ancestors was

the Rhine,<sup>551</sup> point to the idea that river-divinities might have amours with mortals and beget progeny called by their names. In Ireland, Conchobar was so named from the river whence his mother Nessa drew water, perhaps because he was a child of the river-god.<sup>552</sup>

The name of the water-divinity was sometimes given to the place of his or her cult, or to the towns which sprang up on the banks of rivers—the divinity thus becoming a tutelary god. Many towns (*e.g.* Divonne or Dyonne, etc.) have names derived from a common Celtic river name *Deuona*, "divine." This name in various forms is found all over the Celtic area,<sup>553</sup> and there is little doubt that the Celts, in their onward progress, named river after river by the name of the same divinity, believing that each new river was a part of his or her kingdom. The name was probably first an appellative, then a personal name, the divine river becoming a divinity. *Deus Nemausus* occurs on votive tablets at Nîmes, the name *Nemausus* being that of the clear and abundant spring there whence flowed the river of the same name. A similar name occurs in other regions—*Nemesa*, a tributary of the Moselle; *Nemh*, the source of the Tara and the former name of the Blackwater; and *Nimis*, a Spanish river mentioned by Appian. Another group includes the *Matrona* (Marne), the *Moder*, the *Madder*, the *Maronne* and *Maronna*, and others, probably derived from a word signifying "mother."<sup>554</sup> The mother-river was that which watered a whole region, just as in the Hindu sacred books the waters are mothers, sources of fertility. The Celtic mother-rivers were probably goddesses, akin to the *Matres*, givers of plenty and fertility. In Gaul, *Sirona*, a river-goddess, is represented like the *Matres*. She was associated with *Grannos*, perhaps as his mother, and Professor Rh<sup>^</sup>ys equates the pair with the Welsh *Modron* and *Mabon*; *Modron* is probably connected with *Matrona*.<sup>555</sup> In any case the Celts regarded rivers as bestowers of life, health, and plenty, and offered them rich gifts and sacrifices.<sup>556</sup>

Gods like *Grannos*, *Borvo*, and others, equated with *Apollo*, presided over healing springs, and they are usually associated with goddesses, as their husbands or sons. But as the goddesses are more numerous, and as most Celtic river names are feminine, female divinities of rivers and springs

doubtless had the earlier and foremost place, especially as their cult was connected with fertility. The gods, fewer in number, were all equated with Apollo, but the goddesses were not merged by the Romans into the personality of one goddess, since they themselves had their groups of river-goddesses, Nymphs and Naiads. Before the Roman conquest the cult of water-divinities, friends of mankind, must have formed a large part of the popular religion of Gaul, and their names may be counted by hundreds. Thermal springs had also their genii, and they were appropriated by the Romans, so that the local gods now shared their healing powers with Apollo, Æsculapius, and the Nymphs. Thus every spring, every woodland brook, every river in glen or valley, the roaring cataract, and the lake were haunted by divine beings, mainly thought of as beautiful females with whom the *Matres* were undoubtedly associated. There they revealed themselves to their worshippers, and when paganism had passed away, they remained as *fées* or fairies haunting spring, or well, or river.<sup>557</sup> Scores of fairy wells still exist, and by them mediæval knights had many a fabled amour with those beautiful beings still seen by the "ignorant" but romantic peasant.

Sanctuaries were erected at these springs by grateful worshippers, and at some of them festivals were held, or they were the resort of pilgrims. As sources of fertility they had a place in the ritual of the great festivals, and sacred wells were visited on Midsummer day, when also the river-gods claimed their human victims. Some of the goddesses were represented by statues or busts in Gallo-Roman times, if not earlier, and other images of them which have been found were of the nature of *ex votos*, presented by worshippers in gratitude for the goddess's healing gifts. Money, ingots of gold or silver, and models of limbs or other parts of the body which had been or were desired to be healed, were also presented. Gregory of Tours says of the Gauls that they "represent in wood or bronze the members in which they suffer, and whose healing they desire, and place them in a temple."<sup>558</sup> Contact of the model with the divinity brought healing to the actual limbs on the principle of sympathetic magic. Many such models have been discovered. Thus in the shrine of Dea Sequana was found a vase with

over a hundred; another contained over eight hundred. Inscriptions were engraved on plaques which were fastened to the walls of temples, or placed in springs.<sup>559</sup> Leaden tablets with inscriptions were placed in springs by those who desired healing or when the waters were low, and on some the actual waters are hardly discriminated from the divinities. The latter are asked to heal or flow or swell—words which apply more to the waters than to them, while the tablets, with their frank animism, also show that, in some cases, there were many elemental spirits of a well, only some of whom were rising to the rank of a goddess. They are called collectively *Niskas*—the Nixies of later tradition, but some have personal names—Lerano, Dibona, Dea—showing that they were tending to become separate divine personalities. The Peisgi are also appealed to, perhaps the later Piskies, unless the word is a corrupt form of a Celtic *peiskos*, or the Latin *piscus*, "fish."<sup>560</sup> This is unlikely, as fish could not exist in a warm sulphurous spring, though the Celts believed in the sacred fish of wells or streams. The fairies now associated with wells or with a water-world beneath them, are usually nameless, and only in a few cases have a definite name. They, like the older spirits of the wells, have generally a beneficent character.<sup>561</sup> Thus in the fountains of Logres dwelt damsels who fed the wayfarer with meat and bread, until grievous wrong was done them, when they disappeared and the land became waste.<sup>562</sup> Occasionally, however, they have a more malevolent character.<sup>563</sup>

The spirit of the waters was often embodied in an animal, usually a fish. Even now in Brittany the fairy dweller in a spring has the form of an eel, while in the seventeenth century Highland wells contained fish so sacred that no one dared to catch them.<sup>564</sup> In Wales S. Cybi's well contained a huge eel in whose virtues the villagers believed, and terror prevailed when any one dared to take it from the water. Two sacred fish still exist in a holy well at Nant Peris, and are replaced by others when they die, the dead fish being buried.<sup>565</sup> This latter act, solemnly performed, is a true sign of the divine or sacred character of the animal. Many wells with sacred fish exist in Ireland, and the fish have usually some supernatural quality—they never alter in

size, they become invisible, or they take the form of beautiful women.<sup>566</sup> Any one destroying such fish was regarded as a sacrilegious person, and sometimes a hostile tribe killed and ate the sacred fish of a district invaded by them, just as Egyptians of one nome insulted those of another by killing their sacred animals.<sup>567</sup> In old Irish beliefs the salmon was the fish of knowledge. Thus whoever ate the salmon of Connla's well was dowered with the wisdom which had come to them through eating nuts from the hazels of knowledge around the well. In this case the sacred fish was eaten, but probably by certain persons only—those who had the right to do so. Sinend, who went to seek inspiration from the well, probably by eating one of its salmon, was overwhelmed by its waters. The legend of the salmon is perhaps based on old ritual practices of the occasional eating of a divine animal. In other cases, legends of a miraculous supply of fish from sacred wells are perhaps later Christian traditions of former pagan beliefs or customs concerning magical methods of increasing a sacred or totem animal species, like those used in Central Australia and New Guinea.<sup>568</sup> The frog is sometimes the sacred animal, and this recalls the *Märchen* of the Frog Bridegroom living in a well, who insisted on marrying the girl who drew its waters. Though this tale is not peculiar to the Celts, it is not improbable that the divine animal guardian of a well may have become the hero of a folk-tale, especially as such wells were sometimes tabu to women.<sup>569</sup> A fly was the guardian spirit of S. Michael's well in Banffshire. Auguries regarding health were drawn from its movements, and it was believed that the fly, when it grew old, transmigrated into another.<sup>570</sup>

Such beliefs were not peculiarly Celtic. They are found in all European folk-lore, and they are still alive among savages—the animal being itself divine or the personification of a divinity. A huge sacred eel was worshipped by the Fijians; in North America and elsewhere there were serpent guardians of the waters; and the Semites worshipped the fish of sacred wells as incarnations or symbols of a god.

Later Celtic folk-belief associated monstrous and malevolent beings with rivers and lakes. These may be the older divinities to whom a demoniac form has been given, but even in pagan times such monstrous

beings may have been believed in, or they may be survivals of the more primitive monstrous guardians of the waters. The last were dragons or serpents, conventional forms of the reptiles which once dwelt in watery places, attacking all who came near. This old idea certainly survived in Irish and Highland belief, for the Fians conquered huge dragons or serpents in lochs, or saints chained them to the bottom of the waters. Hence the common place-name of Loch na piast, "Loch of the Monster." In other tales they emerge and devour the impious or feast on the dead.<sup>571</sup> The *Dracs* of French superstition—river monsters who assume human form and drag down victims to the depths, where they devour them—resemble these.

The *Each Uisge*, or "Water-horse," a horse with staring eyes, webbed feet, and a slimy coat, is still dreaded. He assumes different forms and lures the unwary to destruction, or he makes love in human shape to women, some of whom discover his true nature by seeing a piece of water-weed in his hair, and only escape with difficulty. Such a water-horse was forced to drag the chariot of S. Fechin of Fore, and under his influence became "gentler than any other horse."<sup>572</sup> Many Highland lochs are still haunted by this dreaded being, and he is also known in Ireland and France, where, however, he has more of a tricky and less of a demoniac nature.<sup>573</sup> His horse form is perhaps connected with the similar form ascribed to Celtic water-divinities. Manannan's horses were the waves, and he was invariably associated with a horse. Epona, the horse-goddess, was perhaps originally goddess of a spring, and, like the *Matres*, she is sometimes connected with the waters.<sup>574</sup> Horses were also sacrificed to river-divinities.<sup>575</sup> But the beneficent water-divinities in their horse form have undergone a curious distortion, perhaps as the result of later Christian influences. The name of one branch of the Fomorians, the Goborchinn, means the "Horse-headed," and one of their kings was Eochaid Echchenn, or "Horse-head."<sup>576</sup> Whether these have any connection with the water-horse is uncertain.

The foaming waters may have suggested another animal personification, since the name of the Boyne in Ptolemy, (bououinda), is derived from a primitive *bóu-s*, "ox," and *vindo-s*, "white," in Irish *bó fínd*, "white cow."<sup>577</sup> But it is not certain that this or the Celtic cult of the bull was connected



with the belief in the *Tarbh Uisge*, or "Water-bull," which had no ears and could assume other shapes. It dwells in lochs and is generally friendly to man, occasionally emerging to mate with ordinary cows. In the Isle of Man the *Tarroo Ushtey*, however, begets monsters.<sup>578</sup> These Celtic water-monsters have a curious resemblance to the Australian *Bunyip*.

The *Uruisg*, often confused with the brownie, haunts lonely places and waterfalls, and, according to his mood, helps or harms the wayfarer. His appearance is that of a man with shaggy hair and beard.<sup>579</sup> In Wales the *afanc* is a water-monster, though the word first meant "dwarf," then "water-dwarf," of whom many kinds existed. They correspond to the Irish water-dwarfs, the *Luchorpáin*, descended with the Fomorians and Goborchinn from Ham.<sup>580</sup>

In other cases the old water beings have a more pleasing form, like the syrens and other fairy beings who haunt French rivers, or the mermaids of Irish estuaries.<sup>581</sup> In Celtic France and Britain lake fairies are connected with a water-world like that of Elysium tales, the region of earlier divinities.<sup>582</sup> They unite with mortals, who, as in the Swan-maiden tales, lose their fairy brides through breaking a tabu. In many Welsh tales the bride is obtained by throwing bread and cheese on the waters, when she appears with an old man who has all the strength of youth. He presents his daughter and a number of fairy animals to the mortal. When she disappears into the waters after the breaking of the tabu, the lake is sometimes drained in order to recover her; the father then appears and threatens to submerge the whole district. Father and daughters are earlier lake divinities, and in the bread and cheese we may see a relic of the offerings to these.<sup>583</sup>

Human sacrifice to water-divinities is suggested by the belief that water-monsters devour human beings, and by the tradition that a river claims its toll of victims every year. In popular rhymes the annual character of the sacrifice is hinted at, and Welsh legend tells of a voice heard once a year from rivers or lakes, crying, "The hour is come, but the man is not."<sup>584</sup> Here there is the trace of an abandoned custom of sacrifice and of the traditional idea of the anger of the divinity at being neglected. Such spirits or gods,

like the water-monsters, would be ever on the watch to capture those who trespassed on their domain. In some cases the victim is supposed to be claimed on Midsummer eve, the time of the sacrifice in the pagan period.<sup>585</sup> The spirits of wells had also a harmful aspect to those, at least, who showed irreverence in approaching them. This is seen in legends about the danger of looking rashly into a well or neglecting to cover it, or in the belief that one must not look back after visiting the well. Spirits of wells were also besought to do harm to enemies.

Legends telling of the danger of removing or altering a well, or of the well moving elsewhere because a woman washed her hands in it, point to old tabus concerning wells. Boand, wife of Nechtain, went to the fairy well which he and his cup-bearers alone might visit, and when she showed her contempt for it, the waters rose and destroyed her. They now flow as the river Boyne. Sinend met with a similar fate for intruding on Connla's well, in this case the pursuing waters became the Shannon.<sup>586</sup> These are variants of a story which might be used to explain the origin of any river, but the legends suggest that certain wells were tabu to women because certain branches of knowledge, taught by the well, must be reserved for men.<sup>587</sup> The legends said in effect, "See what came of women obtruding beyond their proper sphere." Savage "mysteries" are usually tabu to women, who also exclude men from their sacred rites. On the other hand, as all tribal lore was once in the hands of the wise woman, such tabus and legends may have arisen when men began to claim such lore. In other legends women are connected with wells, as the guardians who must keep them locked up save when water was drawn. When the woman neglected to replace the cover, the waters burst forth, overwhelming her, and formed a loch.<sup>588</sup> The woman is the priestess of the well who, neglecting part of its ritual, is punished. Even in recent times we find sacred wells in charge of a woman who instructs the visitors in the due ritual to be performed.<sup>589</sup> If such legends and survivals thus point to former Celtic priestesses of wells, these are paralleled by the Norse Horgabrudar, guardians of wells, now elves living in the waters.<sup>590</sup> That such legends are based on the ritual of well-worship is suggested by Boand's walking three times *widdershins* round the well,



instead of the customary *deiseil*. The due ritual must be observed, and the stories are a warning against its neglect.

In spite of twenty centuries of Christianity and the anathemas of saints and councils, the old pagan practices at healing wells have survived—a striking instance of human conservatism. S. Patrick found the pagans of his day worshipping a well called *Slán*, "health-giving," and offering sacrifices to it,<sup>591</sup> and the Irish peasant to-day has no doubt that there is something divine about his holy wells. The Celts brought the belief in the divinity of springs and wells with them, but would naturally adopt local cults wherever they found them. Afterwards the Church placed the old pagan wells under the protection of saints, but part of the ritual often remained unchanged. Hence many wells have been venerated for ages by different races and through changes in religion and polity. Thus at the thermal springs of Vicarello offerings have been found which show that their cult has continued from the Stone Age, through the Bronze Age, to the days of Roman civilisation, and so into modern times; nor is this a solitary instance.<sup>592</sup> But it serves to show that all races, high and low, preserve the great outlines of primitive nature religion unchanged. In all probability the ritual of the healing wells has also remained in great part unaltered, and wherever it is found it follows the same general type. The patient perambulated the well three times *deiseil* or sun-wise, taking care not to utter a word. Then he knelt at the well and prayed to the divinity for his healing. In modern times the saint, but occasionally the well itself, is prayed to.<sup>593</sup> Then he drank of the waters, bathed in them, or laved his limbs or sores, probably attended by the priestess of the well. Having paid her dues, he made an offering to the divinity of the well, and affixed the bandage or part of his clothing to the well or a tree near by, that through it he might be in continuous *rapport* with the healing influences. Ritual formulæ probably accompanied these acts, but otherwise no word was spoken, and the patient must not look back on leaving the well. Special times, Beltane, Midsummer, or August 1st, were favourable for such visits,<sup>594</sup> and where a patient was too ill to present himself at the well, another might perform the ritual for him.<sup>595</sup>

The rag or clothing hung on the tree seems to connect the spirit of the tree with that of the well, and tree and well are often found together. But sometimes it is thrown into the well, just as the Gaulish villagers of S. Gregory's day threw offerings of cloth and wool into a sacred lake.<sup>596</sup> The rag is even now regarded in the light of an offering, and such offerings, varying from valuable articles of clothing to mere rags, are still hung on sacred trees by the folk. It thus probably has always had a sacrificial aspect in the ritual of the well, but as magic and religion constantly blend, it had also its magical aspect. The rag, once in contact with the patient, transferred his disease to the tree, or, being still subtly connected with him, through it the healing properties passed over to him.

The offering thrown into the well—a pin, coin, etc., may also have this double aspect. The sore is often pricked or rubbed with the pin as if to transfer the disease to the well, and if picked up by another person, the disease may pass to him. This is also true of the coin.<sup>597</sup> But other examples show the sacrificial nature of the pin or other trifle, which is probably symbolic or a survival of a more costly offering. In some cases it is thought that those who do not leave it at the well from which they have drunk will die of thirst, and where a coin is offered it is often supposed to disappear, being taken by the spirit of the well.<sup>598</sup> The coin has clearly the nature of an offering, and sometimes it must be of gold or silver, while the antiquity of the custom on Celtic ground is seen by the classical descriptions of the coins glittering in the pool of Clitumnus and of the "gold of Toulouse" hid in sacred tanks.<sup>599</sup> It is also an old and widespread belief that all water belongs to some divine or monstrous guardian, who will not part with any of it without a *quid pro quo*. In many cases the two rites of rag and pin are not both used, and this may show that originally they had the same purpose—magical or sacrificial, or perhaps both. Other sacrifices were also made—an animal, food, or an *ex voto*, the last occurring even in late survivals as at S. Thenew's Well, Glasgow, where even in the eighteenth century tin cut to represent the diseased member was placed on the tree, or at S. Winifred's Well in Wales, where crutches were left.

Certain waters had the power of ejecting the demon of madness. Besides drinking, the patient was thrown into the waters, the shock being intended to drive the demon away, as elsewhere demons are exorcised by flagellation or beating. The divinity of the waters aided the process, and an offering was usually made to him. In other cases the sacred waters were supposed to ward off disease from the district or from those who drank of them. Or, again, they had the power of conferring fertility. Women made pilgrimages to wells, drank or bathed in the waters, implored the spirit or saint to grant them offspring, and made a due offering.<sup>600</sup> Spirit or saint, by a transfer of his power, produced fruitfulness, but the idea was in harmony with the recognised power of water to purify, strengthen, and heal. Women, for a similar reason, drank or washed in the waters or wore some articles dipped in them, in order to have an easy delivery or abundance of milk.<sup>601</sup>

The waters also gave oracles, their method of flowing, the amount of water in the well, the appearance or non-appearance of bubbles at the surface when an offering was thrown in, the sinking or floating of various articles, all indicating whether a cure was likely to occur, whether fortune or misfortune awaited the inquirer, or, in the case of girls, whether their lovers would be faithful. The movements of the animal guardian of the well were also ominous to the visitor.<sup>602</sup> Rivers or river divinities were also appealed to. In cases of suspected fidelity the Celts dwelling by the Rhine placed the newly-born child in a shield on the waters. If it floated the mother was innocent; if it sank it was allowed to drown, and she was put to death.<sup>603</sup> Girls whose purity was suspected were similarly tested, and S. Gregory of Tours tells how a woman accused of adultery was proved by being thrown into the Saône.<sup>604</sup> The mediæval witch ordeal by water is connected with this custom, which is, however, widespread.<sup>605</sup>

The malevolent aspect of the spirit of the well is seen in the "cursing wells" of which it was thought that when some article inscribed with an enemy's name was thrown into them with the accompaniment of a curse, the spirit of the well would cause his death. In some cases the curse was inscribed on a leaden tablet thrown into the waters, just as, in other cases, a prayer for the offerer's benefit was engraved on it. Or, again, objects over

which a charm had been said were placed in a well that the victim who drew water might be injured. An excellent instance of a cursing-well is that of Fynnon Elian in Denbigh, which must once have had a guardian priestess, for in 1815 an old woman who had charge of it presided at the ceremony. She wrote the name of the victim in a book, receiving a gift at the same time. A pin was dropped into the well in the name of the victim, and through it and through knowledge of his name, the spirit of the well acted upon him to his hurt.<sup>606</sup> Obviously rites like these, in which magic and religion mingle, are not purely Celtic, but it is of interest to note their existence in Celtic lands and among Celtic folk.

<sup>545</sup>. *Ethnol. in Folklore*, 104 f.

<sup>546</sup>. D'Arbois, *PH* ii. 132, 169; Dottin, 240.

<sup>547</sup>. Justin, xxxii. 3; Strabo, iv. 1. 13.

<sup>548</sup>. S. Gregory, *In Glor. Conf.* ch. 2. Perhaps the feast and offerings were intended to cause rain in time of drought. See p. 321, *infra*.

<sup>549</sup>. Adamman, *Vita Colum.* ii. 10.

<sup>550</sup>. See Holder, *s.v.*

<sup>551</sup>. D'Arbois, *RC* x. 168, xiv. 377; *CIL* xii. 33; Propertius, iv. 10. 41.

<sup>552</sup>. See p. 349, *infra*.

<sup>553</sup>. Cf. Ptolemy's (Dêouana) and (Dêouna) (ii. 3. 19, 11. 29); the Scots and English Dee; the Divy in Wales; Dêve, Dive, and Divette in France; Devon in England; Deva in Spain (Ptolemy's (Dêoua), ii. 6. 8). The Shannon is surnamed even in the seventh century "the goddess" (*Trip. Life*, 313).

<sup>554</sup>. Holder, *s.v.*; D'Arbois, *PH* ii. 119, thinks *Matrona* is Ligurian. But it seems to have strong Celtic affinities.

<sup>555</sup>. Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 27-29, *RC* iv. 137.

<sup>556</sup>. On the whole subject see Pictet, "Quelques noms celtiques de rivières," *RC* ii. 1 f. Orosius, v. 15. 6, describes the sacrifices of gold, silver, and horses, made to the Rhône.

<sup>557</sup>. Maury, 18. By extension of this belief any divinity might appear by the haunted spring. S. Patrick and his synod of bishops at an Irish well were supposed to be *síd* or gods (p. 64, *supra*.) By a fairy well Jeanne d'Arc had her first vision.

<sup>558</sup>. Greg. Tours, *Vita Patr.* c. 6.

- [559.](#) See Reinach, *Catal. Sommaire*, 23, 115; Baudot, *Rapport sur les fouilles faits aux sources de la Seine*, ii. 120; *RC* ii. 26.
- [560.](#) For these tablets see Nicolson, *Keltic Studies*, 131 f.; Jullian, *RC* 1898.
- [561.](#) Sébillot, ii. 195.
- [562.](#) Prologue to Chrestien's *Conte du Graal*.
- [563.](#) Sébillot, ii. 202 f.
- [564.](#) *Ibid.* 196-197; Martin, 140-141; Dalyell, 411.
- [565.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* i. 366; *Folk-Lore*, viii. 281. If the fish appeared when an invalid drank of the well, this was a good omen. For the custom of burying sacred animals, see Herod, ii. 74; Ælian, xiii. 26.
- [566.](#) Gomme, *Ethnol. in Folklore*, 92.
- [567.](#) *Trip. Life*, 113; Tigernach, *Annals*, A.D. 1061.
- [568.](#) Mackinley, 184.
- [569.](#) Burne, *Shropshire Folk-Lore*, 416; Campbell, *WHT* ii. 145.
- [570.](#) *Old Stat. Account*, xii. 465.
- [571.](#) S. Patrick, when he cleared Ireland of serpents, dealt in this way with the worst specimens. S. Columba quelled a monster which terrified the dwellers by the Ness. Joyce, *PN* i. 197; Adamnan, *Vita Columb.* ii. 28; Kennedy, 12, 82, 246; *RC* iv. 172, 186.
- [572.](#) *RC* xii. 347.
- [573.](#) For the water-horse, see Campbell, *WHT* iv. 307; Macdongall, 294; Campbell, *Superstitions*, 203; and for the Manx *Glashtyn*, a kind of water-horse, see Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* i. 285. For French cognates, see Bérenger-Féraud, *Superstitions et Survivances*, i. 349 f.
- [574.](#) Reinach, *CMR* i. 63.
- [575.](#) Orosius, v. 15. 6.
- [576.](#) *LU 2a*. Of Eochaid is told a variant of the Midas story—the discovery of his horse's ears. This is also told of Labraid Lore (*RC* ii. 98; Kennedy, 256) and of King Marc'h in Brittany and in Wales (Le Braz, ii. 96; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* 233). Other variants are found in non-Celtic regions, so the story has no mythological significance on Celtic ground.
- [577.](#) Ptol. ii. 2. 7.
- [578.](#) Campbell, *WHT* iv. 300 f.; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* i. 284; Waldron, *Isle of Man*, 147.
- [579.](#) Macdougall, 296; Campbell, *Superstitions*, 195. For the Uruisg as Brownie, see *WHT* ii. 9; Graham, *Scenery of Perthshire*, 19.
- [580.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* ii. 431, 469, *HL*, 592; *Book of Taliesin*, vii. 135.
- [581.](#) Sébillot, ii. 340; *LL* 165; *IT* i. 699.
- [582.](#) Sébillot, ii. 409.

[583.](#) See Pughe, *The Physicians of Myddfai*, 1861 (these were descendants of a water-fairy); Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *Y Cymmrodor*, iv. 164; Hartland, *Arch. Rev.* i. 202. Such water-gods with lovely daughters are known in most mythologies—the Greek Nereus and the Nereids, the Slavonic Water-king, and the Japanese god Ocean-Possessor (Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, 148; Chamberlain, *Ko-ji-ki*, 120). Manannan had nine daughters (Wood-Martin, i. 135).

[584.](#) Sébillot, ii. 338, 344; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* i. 243; Henderson, *Folk-Lore of the N. Counties*, 262. Cf. the rhymes, "L'Arguenon veut chaque année son poisson," the "fish" being a human victim, and

"Blood-thirsty Dee  
Each year needs three,  
But bonny Don,  
She needs none."

[585.](#) Sébillot, ii. 339.

[586.](#) *Rendes Dindsenchas*, *RC* xv. 315, 457. Other instances of punishment following misuse of a well are given in Sébillot, ii. 192; Rees, 520, 523. An Irish lake no longer healed after a hunter swam his mangy hounds through it (Joyce, *PN* ii. 90). A similar legend occurs with the Votiaks, one of whose sacred lakes was removed to its present position because a woman washed dirty clothes in it (*L'Anthropologie*, xv. 107).

[587.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* i. 392.

[588.](#) Girald. Cambr. *Itin. Hib.* ii. 9; Joyce, *OCR* 97; Kennedy, 281; O'Grady, i. 233; Skene, ii. 59; Campbell, *WHT* ii. 147. The waters often submerge a town, now seen below the waves—the town of Is in Armorica (Le Braz, i. p. xxxix), or the towers under Lough Neagh. In some Welsh instances a man is the culprit (Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* i. 379). In the case of Lough Neagh the keeper of the well was Liban, who lived on in the waters as a mermaid. Later she was caught and received the baptismal name of Muirghenn, "sea-birth." Here the myth of a water-goddess, said to have been baptized, is attached to the legend of the careless guardian of a spring, with whom she is identified (O'Grady, ii. 184, 265).

[589.](#) Roberts, *Cambrian Pop. Antiq.* 246; Hunt, *Popular Romances*, 291; *New Stat. Account*, x. 313.

[590.](#) Thorpe, *Northern Myth.* ii. 78.

[591.](#) Joyce, *PN* ii. 84. *Slán* occurs in many names of wells. Well-worship is denounced in the canons of the Fourth Council of Arles.

[592.](#) Cartailhac, *L'Age de Pierre*, 74; Bulliot et Thiollier, *Mission de S. Martin*, 60.

[593.](#) Sébillot, ii. 284.

[594.](#) Dalryell, 79-80; Sébillot, ii. 282, 374; see p. 266, *infra*.

[595.](#) I have compiled this account of the ritual from notices of the modern usages in various works. See, e.g., Moore, *Folk-Lore*, v. 212; Mackinley, *passim*; Hope, *Holy Wells*; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL*; Sébillot, 175 f.; Dixon, *Gairloch*, 150 f.

- [596.](#) Brand, ii. 68; Greg. *In Glor. Conf.* c. 2.
- [597.](#) Sébillot, ii. 293, 296; *Folk-Lore*, iv. 55.
- [598.](#) Mackinley, 194; Sébillot, ii. 296.
- [599.](#) *Folk-Lore*, iii. 67; *Athenæum*, 1893, 415; Pliny, *Ep.* viii. 8; Strabo, iv. 287; Diod. Sic. v. 9.
- [600.](#) Walker, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.* vol. v.; Sébillot, ii. 232. In some early Irish instances a worm swallowed with the waters by a woman causes pregnancy. See p. 352, *infra*.
- [601.](#) Sébillot, ii. 235-236.
- [602.](#) See Le Braz, i. 61; *Folk-Lore*, v. 214; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *CFL* i. 364; Dalyell, 506-507; Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Introd. xliii; Martin, 7; Sébillot, ii. 242 f.; *RC* ii. 486.
- [603.](#) Jullian, *Ep. to Maximin*, 16. The practice may have been connected with that noted by Aristotle, of plunging the newly-born into a river, to strengthen it, as he says (*Pol.* vii. 15. 2), but more probably as a baptismal or purificatory rite. See p. 309, *infra*.
- [604.](#) Lefevre, *Les Gaulois*, 109; Michelet, *Origines du droit français*, 268.
- [605.](#) See examples of its use in Post, *Grundriss der Ethnol. Jurisprudenz*, ii. 459 f.
- [606.](#) Roberts, *Cambrian Popular Antiquities*, 246.



# Tree and Plant Worship

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The Celts had their own cult of trees, but they adopted local cults—Ligurian, Iberian, and others. The *Fagus Deus* (the divine beech), the *Sex arbor* or *Sex arbores* of Pyrenean inscriptions, and an anonymous god represented by a conifer on an altar at Toulouse, probably point to local Ligurian tree cults continued by the Celts into Roman times.<sup>607</sup> Forests were also personified or ruled by a single goddess, like *Dea Arduinna* of the Ardennes and *Dea Abnoba* of the Black Forest.<sup>608</sup> But more primitive ideas prevailed, like that which assigned a whole class of tree-divinities to a forest, e.g. the *Fatae Dervones*, spirits of the oak-woods of Northern Italy.<sup>609</sup> Groups of trees like *Sex arbores* were venerated, perhaps for their height, isolation, or some other peculiarity.

The Celts made their sacred places in dark groves, the trees being hung with offerings or with the heads of victims. Human sacrifices were hung or impaled on trees, e.g. by the warriors of Boudicca.<sup>610</sup> These, like the offerings still placed by the folk on sacred trees, were attached to them because the trees were the abode of spirits or divinities who in many cases had power over vegetation.

Pliny said of the Celts: "They esteem nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the tree on which it grows. But apart from this they choose oak-woods for their sacred groves, and perform no sacred rite without using oak branches."<sup>611</sup> Maximus of Tyre also speaks of the Celtic (? German) image of Zeus as a lofty oak, and an old Irish glossary gives *daur*, "oak," as an early Irish name for "god," and glosses it by *dia*, "god."<sup>612</sup> The sacred need-fire may have been obtained by friction from oak-wood, and it is because of the old sacredness of the oak that a piece of its wood is still used as a talisman in Brittany.<sup>613</sup> Other Aryan folk besides the Celts regarded the oak as the symbol of a high god, of the sun or the sky,<sup>614</sup> but probably this was not its earliest significance. Oak forests were once more extensive over Europe than they are now, and the old tradition that men once lived on



acorns has been shown to be well-founded by the witness of archaeological finds, *e.g.* in Northern Italy.<sup>615</sup> A people living in an oak region and subsisting in part on acorns might easily take the oak as a representative of the spirit of vegetation or growth. It was long-lived, its foliage was a protection, it supplied food, its wood was used as fuel, and it was thus clearly the friend of man. For these reasons, and because it was the most abiding and living thing men knew, it became the embodiment of the spirits of life and growth. Folk-lore survivals show that the spirit of vegetation in the shape of his representative was annually slain while yet in full vigour, that his life might benefit all things and be passed on undiminished to his successor.<sup>616</sup> Hence the oak or a human being representing the spirit of vegetation, or both together, were burned in the Midsummer fires. How, then, did the oak come to symbolise a god equated with Zeus. Though the equation may be worthless, it is possible that the connection lay in the fact that Zeus and Juppiter had agricultural functions, or that, when the equation was made, the earlier spirit of vegetation had become a divinity with functions resembling those of Zeus. The fires were kindled to recruit the sun's life; they were fed with oak-wood, and in them an oak or a human victim representing the spirit embodied in the oak was burned. Hence it may have been thought that the sun was strengthened by the fire residing in the sacred oak; it was thus "the original storehouse or reservoir of the fire which was from time to time drawn out to feed the sun."<sup>617</sup> The oak thus became the symbol of a bright god also connected with growth. But, to judge by folk survivals, the older conception still remained potent, and tree or human victim affected for good all vegetable growth as well as man's life, while at the same time the fire strengthened the sun.

Dr. Evans argues that "the original holy object within the central triliths of Stonehenge was a sacred tree," an oak, image of the Celtic Zeus. The tree and the stones, once associated with ancestor worship, had become symbols of "a more celestial Spirit or Spirits than those of departed human beings."<sup>618</sup> But Stonehenge has now been proved to have been in existence before the arrival of the Celts, hence such a cult must have been pre-Celtic, though it may quite well have been adopted by the Celts. Whether this

hypothetical cult was practised by a tribe, a group of tribes, or by the whole people, must remain obscure, and, indeed, it may well be questioned whether Stonehenge was ever more than the scene of some ancestral rites.

Other trees—the yew, the cypress, the alder, and the ash, were venerated, to judge by what Lucan relates of the sacred grove at Marseilles. The Irish Druids attributed special virtues to the hazel, rowan, and yew, the wood of which was used in magical ceremonies described in Irish texts.<sup>619</sup> Fires of rowan were lit by the Druids of rival armies, and incantations said over them in order to discomfit the opposing host,<sup>620</sup> and the wood of all these trees is still believed to be efficacious against fairies and witches.

The Irish *bile* was a sacred tree, of great age, growing over a holy well or fort. Five of them are described in the *Dindsenchas*, and one was an oak, which not only yielded acorns, but nuts and apples.<sup>621</sup> The mythic trees of Elysium had the same varied fruitage, and the reason in both cases is perhaps the fact that when the cultivated apple took the place of acorns and nuts as a food staple, words signifying "nut" or "acorn" were transferred to the apple. A myth of trees on which all these fruits grew might then easily arise. Another Irish *bile* was a yew described in a poem as "a firm strong god," while such phrases in this poem as "word-pure man," "judgment of origin," "spell of knowledge," may have some reference to the custom of writing divinations in ogham on rods of yew. The other *bile* were ash-trees, and from one of them the *Fir Bile*, "men of the tree," were named—perhaps a totem-clan.<sup>622</sup> The lives of kings and chiefs appear to have been connected with these trees, probably as representatives of the spirit of vegetation embodied in the tree, and under their shadow they were inaugurated. But as a substitute for the king was slain, so doubtless these pre-eminent sacred trees were too sacred, too much charged with supernatural force, to be cut down and burned, and the yearly ritual would be performed with another tree. But in time of feud one tribe gloried in destroying the *bile* of another; and even in the tenth century, when the *bile maighe Adair* was destroyed by Maelocohlen the act was regarded with horror. "But, O reader, this deed did not pass unpunished."<sup>623</sup> Of another

*bile*, that of Borrisokane, it was said that any house in which a fragment of it was burned would itself be destroyed by fire.<sup>624</sup>

Tribal and personal names point to belief in descent from tree gods or spirits and perhaps to totemism. The Eburones were the yew-tree tribe (*eburos*); the Bituriges perhaps had the mistletoe for their symbol, and their surname Vivisci implies that they were called "Mistletoe men."<sup>625</sup> If *bile* (tree) is connected with the name Bile, that of the ancestor of the Milesians, this may point to some myth of descent from a sacred tree, as in the case of the *Fir Bile*, or "men of the tree."<sup>626</sup> Other names like Guidgen (*Viduo-genos*, "son of the tree"), Dergen (*Dervo-genos*, "son of the oak"), Guerngen (*Verno-genos*, "son of the alder"), imply filiation to a tree. Though these names became conventional, they express what had once been a living belief. Names borrowed directly from trees are also found—Ebuos or Ebur, "yew," Derua or Deruacus, "oak," etc.

The veneration of trees growing beside burial mounds or megalithic monuments was probably a pre-Celtic cult continued by the Celts. The tree embodied the ghost of the person buried under it, but such a ghost could then hardly be differentiated from a tree spirit or divinity. Even now in Celtic districts extreme veneration exists for trees growing in cemeteries and in other places. It is dangerous to cut them down or to pluck a leaf or branch from them, while in Breton churchyards the yew is thought to spread a root to the mouth of each corpse.<sup>627</sup> The story of the grave of Cyperissa, daughter of a Celtic king in the Danube region, from which first sprang the "mournful cypress,"<sup>628</sup> is connected with universal legends of trees growing from the graves of lovers until their branches intertwine. These embody the belief that the spirit of the dead is in the tree, which was thus in all likelihood the object of a cult. Instances of these legends occur in Celtic story. Yew-stakes driven through the bodies of Naisi and Deirdre to keep them apart, became yew-trees the tops of which embraced over Armagh Cathedral. A yew sprang from the grave of Bailé Mac Buain, and an apple-tree from that of his lover Aillinn, and the top of each had the form of their heads.<sup>629</sup> The identification of tree and ghost is here complete.

The elder, rowan, and thorn are still planted round houses to keep off witches, or sprigs of rowan are placed over doorways—a survival from the time when they were believed to be tenanted by a beneficent spirit hostile to evil influences. In Ireland and the Isle of Man the thorn is thought to be the resort of fairies, and they, like the woodland fairies or "wood men" are probably representatives of the older tree spirits and gods of groves and forests.<sup>630</sup>

Tree-worship was rooted in the oldest nature worship, and the Church had the utmost difficulty in suppressing it. Councils fulminated against the cult of trees, against offerings to them or the placing of lights before them and before wells or stones, and against the belief that certain trees were too sacred to be cut down or burned. Heavy fines were levied against those who practised these rites, yet still they continued.<sup>631</sup> Amator, Bishop of Auxerre, tried to stop the worship of a large pear-tree standing in the centre of the town and on which the semi-Christian inhabitants hung animals' heads with much ribaldry. At last S. Germanus destroyed it, but at the risk of his life. S. Martin of Tours was allowed to destroy a temple, but the people would not permit him to attack a much venerated pine-tree which stood beside it—an excellent example of the way in which the more official paganism fell before Christianity, while the older religion of the soil, from which it sprang, could not be entirely eradicated.<sup>632</sup> The Church often effected a compromise. Images of the gods affixed to trees were replaced by those of the Virgin, but with curious results. Legends arose telling how the faithful had been led to such trees and there discovered the image of the Madonna miraculously placed among the branches.<sup>633</sup> These are analogous to the legends of the discovery of images of the Virgin in the earth, such images being really those of the *Matres*.

Representations of sacred trees are occasionally met with on coins, altars, and *ex votos*.<sup>634</sup> If the interpretation be correct which sees a representation of part of the Cúchulainn legend on the Paris and Trèves altars, the trees figured there would not necessarily be sacred. But otherwise they may depict sacred trees.

We now turn to Pliny's account of the mistletoe rite. The Druids held nothing more sacred than this plant and the tree on which it grew, probably an oak. Of its groves were formed, while branches of the oak were used in all religious rites. Everything growing on the oak had been sent from heaven, and the presence of the mistletoe showed that God had selected the tree for especial favour. Rare as it was, when found the mistletoe was the object of a careful ritual. On the sixth day of the moon it was culled. Preparations for a sacrifice and feast were made beneath the tree, and two white bulls whose horns had never been bound were brought there. A Druid, clad in white, ascended the tree and cut the mistletoe with a golden sickle. As it fell it was caught in a white cloth; the bulls were then sacrificed, and prayer was made that God would make His gift prosperous to those on whom He had bestowed it. The mistletoe was called "the universal healer," and a potion made from it caused barren animals to be fruitful. It was also a remedy against all poisons.<sup>635</sup> We can hardly believe that such an elaborate ritual merely led up to the medico-magical use of the mistletoe. Possibly, of course, the rite was an attenuated survival of something which had once been more important, but it is more likely that Pliny gives only a few picturesque details and passes by the *rationale* of the ritual. He does not tell us who the "God" of whom he speaks was, perhaps the sun-god or the god of vegetation. As to the "gift," it was probably in his mind the mistletoe, but it may quite well have meant the gift of growth in field and fold. The tree was perhaps cut down and burned; the oxen may have been incarnations of a god of vegetation, as the tree also may have been. We need not here repeat the meaning which has been given to the ritual,<sup>636</sup> but it may be added that if this meaning is correct, the rite probably took place at the time of the Midsummer festival, a festival of growth and fertility. Mistletoe is still gathered on Midsummer eve and used as an antidote to poisons or for the cure of wounds. Its Druidic name is still preserved in Celtic speech in words signifying "all-healer," while it is also called *sùgh an daraich*, "sap of the oak," and *Druidh lus*, "Druid's weed."<sup>637</sup>

Pliny describes other Celtic herbs of grace. *Selago* was culled without use of iron after a sacrifice of bread and wine—probably to the spirit of the

plant. The person gathering it wore a white robe, and went with unshod feet after washing them. According to the Druids, *Selago* preserved one from accident, and its smoke when burned healed maladies of the eye.<sup>638</sup> *Samolus* was placed in drinking troughs as a remedy against disease in cattle. It was culled by a person fasting, with the left hand; it must be wholly uprooted, and the gatherer must not look behind him.<sup>639</sup> *Vervain* was gathered at sunrise after a sacrifice to the earth as an expiation—perhaps because its surface was about to be disturbed. When it was rubbed on the body all wishes were gratified; it dispelled fevers and other maladies; it was an antidote against serpents; and it conciliated hearts. A branch of the dried herb used to asperge a banquet-hall made the guests more convivial<sup>640</sup>

The ritual used in gathering these plants—silence, various tabus, ritual purity, sacrifice—is found wherever plants are culled whose virtue lies in this that they are possessed by a spirit. Other plants are still used as charms by modern Celtic peasants, and, in some cases, the ritual of gathering them resembles that described by Pliny.<sup>641</sup> In Irish sagas plants have magical powers. "Fairy herbs" placed in a bath restored beauty to women bathing therein.<sup>642</sup> During the *Táin* Cúchulainn's wounds were healed with "balsams and healing herbs of fairy potency," and Diancecht used similar herbs to restore the dead at the battle of Mag-tured.<sup>643</sup>

<sup>607</sup>. Sacaze, *Inscr. des Pyren.* 255; Hirschfeld, *Sitzungsberichte* (Berlin, 1896), 448.

<sup>608</sup>. *CIL* vi. 46; *CIR* 1654, 1683.

<sup>609</sup>. D'Arbois, *Les Celtes*, 52.

<sup>610</sup>. Lucan, *Phar.* Usener's ed., 32; Orosius, v. 16. 6; Dio Cass. lxii. 6.

<sup>611</sup>. Pliny, xvi. 44. The Scholiast on Lucan says that the Druids divined with acorns (Usener, 33).

<sup>612</sup>. Max. Tyr. *Diss.* viii. 8; Stokes, *RC* i. 259.

<sup>613</sup>. Le Braz, ii. 18.

<sup>614</sup>. Mr. Chadwick (*Jour. Anth. Inst.* xxx. 26) connects this high god with thunder, and regards the Celtic Zeus (Taranis, in his opinion) as a thunder-god. The oak was associated with this god because his worshippers dwelt under oaks.

<sup>615</sup>. Helbig, *Die Italiker in der Poebene*, 16 f.

<sup>616</sup>. Mannhardt, *Baumkultus*; Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup> iii. 198.



- [617.](#) Frazer, *loc. cit.*
- [618.](#) Evans, *Arch. Rev.* i. 327 f.
- [619.](#) Joyce, *SH* i. 236.
- [620.](#) O'Curry, *MC* i. 213.
- [621.](#) *LL* 199b; *Rennes Dindsenchas*, *RC* xv. 420.
- [622.](#) *RC* xv. 455, xvi. 279; Hennessey, *Chron. Scot.* 76.
- [623.](#) Keating, 556; Joyce, *PN* i. 499.
- [624.](#) Wood-Martin, ii. 159.
- [625.](#) D'Arbois, *Les Celtes*, 51; Jullian, 41.
- [626.](#) Cook, *Folk-Lore*, xvii. 60.
- [627.](#) See Sébillot, i. 293; Le Braz, i. 259; *Folk-Lore Journal*, v. 218; *Folk-Lore Record*, 1882.
- [628.](#) Val. Probus, *Comm. in Georgica*, ii. 84.
- [629.](#) Miss Hull, 53; O'Ourry, *MS. Mat.* 465. Writing tablets, made from each of the trees when they were cut down, sprang together and could not be separated.
- [630.](#) *Stat. Account*, iii. 27; Moore, 151; Sébillot, i. 262, 270.
- [631.](#) Dom Martin, i. 124; *Vita S. Eligii*, ii. 16.
- [632.](#) *Acta Sanct.* (Bolland.), July 31; Sulp. Sever. *Vita S. Mart.* 457.
- [633.](#) Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* 76; Maury, 13, 299. The story of beautiful women found in trees may be connected with the custom of placing images in trees, or with the belief that a goddess might be seen emerging from the tree in which she dwelt.
- [634.](#) De la Tour, *Atlas des Monnaies Gaul.* 260, 286; Reinach, *Catal. Sommaire*, 29.
- [635.](#) Pliny, *HN* xvi. 44.
- [636.](#) See p. 162, *supra*.
- [637.](#) See Cameron, *Gaelic Names of Plants*, 45. In Gregoire de Rostren, *Dict. françois-celt.* 1732, mistletoe is translated by *dour-dero*, "oak-water," and is said to be good for several evils.
- [638.](#) Pliny, xxiv. 11.
- [639.](#) *Ibid.*
- [640.](#) *Ibid.* xxv. 9.
- [641.](#) See Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*; De Nore, *Coutumes ... des Provinces de France*, 150 f.; Sauv  , *RC* vi. 67, *CM* ix. 331.
- [642.](#) O'Grady, ii. 126.
- [643.](#) Miss Hull, 172; see p. 77, *supra*.

# Animal Worship

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Animal worship pure and simple had declined among the Celts of historic times, and animals were now regarded mainly as symbols or attributes of divinities. The older cult had been connected with the pastoral stage in which the animals were divine, or with the agricultural stage in which they represented the corn-spirit, and perhaps with totemism. We shall study here (1) traces of the older animal cults; (2) the transformation of animal gods into symbols; and (3) traces of totemism.

### 1.

The presence of a bull with three cranes (*Tarvos Trigaranos*) on the Paris altar, along with the gods Esus, Juppiter, and Vulcan, suggests that it was a divine animal, or the subject of a divine myth. As has been seen, this bull may be the bull of the *Táin bó Cuailgne*. Both it and its opponent were reincarnations of the swine-herds of two gods. In the Irish sagas reincarnation is only attributed to gods or heroes, and this may point to the divinity of the bulls. We have seen that this and another altar may depict some myth in which the bull was the incarnation of a tree or vegetation spirit. The divine nature of the bull is attested by its presence on Gaulish coins as a religious symbol, and by images of the animal with three horns—an obvious symbol of divinity.<sup>644</sup> On such an image in bronze the Cimbri, Celticised Germans, swore. The images are pre-Roman, since they are found at Hallstadt and La Tène. Personal names like *Donnotaurus* (the equivalent of the *Donn Taruos* of the *Táin*) or *Deiotaros* ("divine bull"), show that men were called after the divine animal.<sup>645</sup> Similarly many place-names in which the word *taruos* occurs, in Northern Italy, the Pyrenees, Scotland, Ireland, and elsewhere, suggest that the places bearing these names were sites of a bull cult or that some myth, like that elaborated in the *Táin*, had been there localised.<sup>646</sup> But, as possibly in the case of Cúchulainn



and the bull, the animal tended to become the symbol of a god, a tendency perhaps aided by the spread of Mithraism with its symbolic bull. A god Medros leaning on a bull is represented at Haguenu, possibly a form of Mider or of Meduris, a surname of Toutatis, unless Medros is simply Mithras.<sup>647</sup> Echoes of the cult of the bull or cow are heard in Irish tales of these animals brought from the *síd*, or of magic bulls or of cows which produced enormous supplies of milk, or in saintly legends of oxen leading a saint to the site of his future church.<sup>648</sup> These legends are also told of the swine,<sup>649</sup> and they perhaps arose when a Christian church took the place of the site of a local animal cult, legend fusing the old and the new cult by making the once divine animal point out the site of the church. A late relic of a bull cult may be found in the carnival procession of the *Boeuf Gras* at Paris.

A cult of a swine-god Moccus has been referred to. The boar was a divine symbol on standards, coins, and altars, and many bronze images of the animal have been found. These were temple treasures, and in one case the boar is three-horned.<sup>650</sup> But it was becoming the symbol of a goddess, as is seen by the altars on which it accompanies a goddess, perhaps of fertility, and by a bronze image of a goddess seated on a boar. The altars occur in Britain, of which the animal may be the emblem—the "Caledonian monster" of Claudian's poem.<sup>651</sup> The Galatian Celts abstained from eating the swine, and there has always been a prejudice against its flesh in the Highlands. This has a totemic appearance.<sup>652</sup> But the swine is esteemed in Ireland, and in the texts monstrous swine are the staple article of famous feasts.<sup>653</sup> These may have been legendary forms of old swine-gods, the feasts recalling sacrificial feasts on their flesh. Magic swine were also the immortal food of the gods. But the boar was tabu to certain persons, *e.g.* Diarmaid, though whether this is the attenuated memory of a clan totem restriction is uncertain. In Welsh story the swine comes from Elysium—a myth explaining the origin of its domestication, while domestication certainly implies an earlier cult of the animal. When animals come to be domesticated, the old cult restrictions, *e.g.* against eating them, usually pass

away. For this reason, perhaps, the Gauls, who worshipped an anthropomorphic swine-god, trafficked in the animal and may have eaten it.<sup>654</sup> Welsh story also tells of the magic boar, the *Twrch Trwyth*, hunted by Arthur, possibly a folk-tale reminiscence of a boar divinity.<sup>655</sup> Place-names also point to a cult of the swine, and a recollection of its divinity may underlie the numerous Irish tales of magical swine.<sup>656</sup> The magic swine which issued from the cave of Cruachan and destroyed the young crops are suggestive of the theriomorphic corn-spirit in its occasional destructive aspect.<sup>657</sup> Bones of the swine, sometimes cremated, have been found in Celtic graves in Britain and at Hallstadt, and in one case the animal was buried alone in a tumulus at Hallstadt, just as sacred animals were buried in Egypt, Greece, and elsewhere.<sup>658</sup> When the animal was buried with the dead, it may have been as a sacrifice to the ghost or to the god of the underworld.

The divinity of the serpent is proved by the occurrence of a horned serpent with twelve Roman gods on a Gallo-Roman altar.<sup>659</sup> In other cases a horned or ram's-headed serpent appears as the attribute of a god, and we have seen that the ram's-headed serpent may be a fusion of the serpent as a chthonian animal with the ram, sacrificed to the dead. In Greece Dionysus had the form both of a bull and a horned serpent, the horn being perhaps derived from the bull symbol. M. Reinach claims that the primitive elements of the Orphic myth of the Thracian Dionysos-Zagreus—divine serpents producing an egg whence came the horned snake Zagreus, occur in dislocated form in Gaul. There enlacing serpents were believed to produce a magic egg, and there a horned serpent was worshipped, but was not connected with the egg. But they may once have been connected, and if so, there may be a common foundation both for the Greek and the Celtic conceptions in a Celtic element in Thrace.<sup>660</sup> The resemblances, however, may be mere coincidences, and horned serpents are known in other mythologies—the horn being perhaps a symbol of divinity. The horned serpent sometimes accompanies a god who has horns, possibly Cernunnos, the underworld god, in accordance with the chthonian character of the

serpent.<sup>661</sup> In the Cùchulainn cycle Loeg on his visit to the Other-world saw two-headed serpents—perhaps a further hint of this aspect of the animal.<sup>662</sup>

In all these instances of animal cults examples of the tendency to make the divine animal anthropomorphic have been seen. We have now to consider some instances of the complete anthropomorphic process.

## 2.

An old bear cult gave place to the cult of a bear goddess and probably of a god. At Berne—an old Celtic place-name meaning "bear"—was found a bronze group of a goddess holding a patera with fruit, and a bear approaching her as if to be fed. The inscription runs, *Deae Artioni Licinia Sabinilla*.<sup>663</sup> A local bear-cult had once existed at Berne, and is still recalled in the presence of the famous bears there, but the divine bear had given place to a goddess whose name and symbol were ursine. From an old Celtic *Artos*, fem. *Arta*, "bear," were derived various divine names. Of these *Dea Artio(n)* means "bear goddess," and *Artaios*, equated with Mercury, is perhaps a bear god.<sup>664</sup> Another bear goddess, Andarta, was honoured at Die (Drôme), the word perhaps meaning "strong bear"—*And-* being an augmentive.<sup>665</sup> Numerous place-names derived from *Artos* perhaps witness to a widespread cult of the bear, and the word also occurs in Welsh, and Irish personal names—Arthmael, Arthbiu, and possibly Arthur, and the numerous Arts of Irish texts. Descent from the divine bear is also signified in names like Welsh *Arthgen*, Irish *Artigan*, from *Artigenos*, "son of the bear." Another Celtic name for "bear" was the Gaulish *matu*, Irish *math*, found in *Matugenos*, "son of the bear," and in MacMahon, which is a corrupt form of *Mac-math-ghamhain*, "son of the bear's son," or "of the bear."<sup>666</sup>

Similarly a cult of the stag seems to have given place to that of a god with stag's horns, represented on many bas-reliefs, and probably connected with the underworld.<sup>667</sup> The stag, as a grain-eater, may have been regarded as the embodiment of the corn-spirit, and then associated with the under-earth region whence the corn sprang, by one of those inversions of thought

so common in the stage of transition from animal gods to gods with animal symbols. The elk may have been worshipped in Ireland, and a three antlered stag is the subject of a story in the Fionn saga.<sup>668</sup> Its third antler, like the third horn of bull or boar, may be a sign of divinity.

The horse had also been worshipped, but a goddess Epona (Gaul. *epo-s*, "horse"), protectress of horses and asses, took its place, and had a far-spread cult. She rides a horse or mare with its foal, or is seated among horses, or feeds horses. A representation of a mare suckling a foal—a design analogous to those in which Epona feeds foals—shows that her primitive equine nature had not been forgotten.<sup>669</sup> The Gauls were horse-rearers, and Epona was the goddess of the craft; but, as in other cases, a cult of the horse must have preceded its domestication, and its flesh may not have been eaten, or, if so, only sacramentally.<sup>670</sup> Finally, the divine horse became the anthropomorphic horse-goddess. Her images were placed in stables, and several inscriptions and statuettes have been found in such buildings or in cavalry barracks.<sup>671</sup> The remains of the cult have been found in the Danube and Rhine valleys, in Eastern Gaul, and in Northern Italy, all Celtic regions, but it was carried everywhere by Roman cavalry recruited from the Celtic tribes.<sup>672</sup> Epona is associated with, and often has, the symbols of the *Matres*, and one inscription reads *Eponabus*, as if there were a group of goddesses called Epona.<sup>673</sup> A goddess who promoted the fertility of mares would easily be associated with goddesses of fertility. Epona may also have been confused with a river-goddess conceived of as a spirited steed. Water-spirits took that shape, and the *Matres* were also river-goddesses.

A statuette of a horse, with a dedication to a god Rudiobus, otherwise unknown, may have been carried processionally, while a mule has a dedication to Segomo, equated elsewhere with Mars. A mule god Mullo, also equated with Mars, is mentioned on several inscriptions.<sup>674</sup> The connection with Mars may have been found in the fact that the October horse was sacrificed to him for fertility, while the horse was probably associated with fertility among the Celts. The horse was sacrificed both by Celts and Teutons at the Midsummer festival, undoubtedly as a divine

animal. Traces of the Celtic custom survive in local legends, and may be interpreted in the fuller light of the Teutonic accounts. In Ireland a man wearing a horse's head rushed through the fire, and was supposed to represent all cattle; in other words, he was a surrogate for them. The legend of Each Labra, a horse which lived in a mound and issued from it every Midsummer eve to give oracles for the coming year, is probably connected with the Midsummer sacrifice of the horse.<sup>675</sup> Among the Teutons the horse was a divine sacrificial animal, and was also sacred to Freyr, the god of fertility, while in Teutonic survivals a horse's head was placed in the Midsummer fire.<sup>676</sup> The horse was sporadically the representative of the corn-spirit, and at Rome the October horse was sacrificed in that capacity and for fertility.<sup>677</sup> Among the Celts, the horse sacrificed at Midsummer may have represented the vegetation-spirit and benefited all domestic animals—the old rite surviving in an attenuated form, as described above.

Perhaps the goddess Damona was an animal divinity, if her name is derived from *damatos*, "sheep," cognate to Welsh *dafad*, "sheep," and Gaelic *damh*, "ox." Other divine animals, as has been seen, were associated with the waters, and the use of beasts and birds in divination doubtless points to their divine character. A cult of bird-gods may lurk behind the divine name Bran, "raven," and the reference to the magic birds of Rhiannon in the *Triads*.

### 3.

Animal worship is connected with totemism, and certain things point to its existence among the Celts, or to the existence of conditions out of which totemism was elsewhere developed. These are descent from animals, animal tabus, the sacramental eating of an animal, and exogamy.

(1) *Descent from animals*.—Celtic names implying descent from animals or plants are of two classes, clan and personal names. If the latter are totemistic, they must be derived from the former, since totemism is an affair of the clan, while the so-called "personal totem," exemplified by the American Indian *manitou*, is the guardian but never the ancestor of a man.

Some clan names have already been referred to. Others are the Bibroci of south-east Britain, probably a beaver clan (*bebro*s), and the Eburones, a yew-tree clan (*eburo*s).<sup>678</sup> Irish clans bore animal names: some groups were called "calves," others "griffins," others "red deer," and a plant name is seen in *Fir Bile*, "men of the tree."<sup>679</sup> Such clan totemism perhaps underlies the stories of the "descendants of the wolf" at Ossory, who became wolves for a time as the result of a saintly curse. Other instances of lycanthropy were associated with certain families.<sup>680</sup> The belief in lycanthropy might easily attach itself to existing wolf-clans, the transformation being then explained as the result of a curse. The stories of Cormac mac Art, suckled by a she-wolf, of Lughaid mac Con, "son of a wolf-dog," suckled by that animal, and of Oisín, whose mother was a fawn, and who would not eat venison, are perhaps totemistic, while to totemism or to a cult of animals may be ascribed what early travellers in Ireland say of the people taking wolves as god-fathers and praying to them to do them no ill.<sup>681</sup> In Wales bands of warriors at the battle of Cattraeth are described in Oneurin's *Gododin* as dogs, wolves, bears, and ravens, while Owein's band of ravens which fought against Arthur, may have been a raven clan, later misunderstood as actual ravens.<sup>682</sup> Certain groups of Dalriad Scots bore animal names—Cinel Gabran, "Little goat clan," and Cinel Loarn, "Fox clan." Possibly the custom of denoting Highland clans by animal or plant badges may be connected with a belief in descent from plants or animals. On many coins an animal is represented on horseback, perhaps leading a clan, as birds led the Celts to the Danube area, and these may depict myths telling how the clan totem animal led the clan to its present territory.<sup>683</sup> Such myths may survive in legends relating how an animal led a saint to the site of his church.<sup>684</sup> Celtic warriors wore helmets with horns, and Irish story speaks of men with cat, dog, or goat heads.<sup>685</sup> These may have been men wearing a head-gear formed of the skin or head of the clan totem, hence remembered at a later time as monstrous beings, while the horned helmets would be related to the same custom. Solinus describes the Britons as wearing animal skins before going into battle.<sup>686</sup> Were these skins of totem animals under



whose protection they thus placed themselves? The "forms of beasts, birds, and fishes" which the Cruithne or Picts tattooed on their bodies may have been totem marks, while the painting of their bodies with woad among the southern Britons may have been of the same character, though Cæsar's words hardly denote this. Certain marks on faces figured on Gaulish coins seem to be tattoo marks.<sup>687</sup>

It is not impossible that an early wolf-totem may have been associated, because of the animal's nocturnal wanderings in forests, with the underworld whence, according to Celtic belief, men sprang and whither they returned, and whence all vegetation came forth. The Gallo-Roman Silvanus, probably an underworld god, wears a wolf-skin, and may thus be a wolf-god. There were various types of underworld gods, and this wolf-type—perhaps a local wolf-totem ancestor assimilated to a local "Dispater"—may have been the god of a clan who imposed its mythic wolf origin on other clans. Some Celtic bronzes show a wolf swallowing a man who offers no resistance, probably because he is dead. The wolf is much bigger than the man, and hence may be a god.<sup>688</sup> These bronzes would thus represent a belief setting forth the return of men to their totem ancestor after death, or to the underworld god connected with the totem ancestor, by saying that he devoured the dead, like certain Polynesian divinities and the Greek Eurynomos.

In many individual names the first part is the name of an animal or plant, the second is usually *genos*, "born from," or "son of," e.g. Artigenos, Matugenos, "son of the bear" (*artos*, *matu-*); Urogenos, occurring as Urogenertos, "he who has the strength of the son of the urus"; Brannogenos, "son of the raven"; Cunogenos, "son of the dog."<sup>689</sup> These names may be derived from clan totem names, but they date back to a time when animals, trees, and men were on a common footing, and the possibility of human descent from a tree or an animal was believed in. Professor Rhys has argued from the frequency of personal names in Ireland, like Cúrói, "Hound of Rói," Cú Corb, "Corb's Hound," Mac Con, "Hound's Son," and Maelchon, "Hound's Slave," that there existed a dog totem or god, not of the Celts, but of a pre-Celtic race.<sup>690</sup> This assumes that totemism was non-

Celtic, an assumption based on preconceived notions of what Celtic institutions ought to have been. The names, it should be observed, are personal, not clan names.

(2) *Animal tabus*.—Besides the dislike of swine's flesh already noted among certain Celtic groups, the killing and eating of the hare, hen, and goose were forbidden among the Britons. Cæsar says they bred these animals for amusement, but this reason assigned by him is drawn from his knowledge of the breeding of rare animals by rich Romans as a pastime, since he had no knowledge of the breeding of sacred animals which were not eaten—a common totemic or animal cult custom.<sup>691</sup> The hare was used for divination by Boudicca,<sup>692</sup> doubtless as a sacred animal, and it has been found that a sacred character still attaches to these animals in Wales. A cock or hen was ceremonially killed and eaten on Shrove Tuesday, either as a former totemic animal, or, less likely, as a representative of the corn-spirit. The hare is not killed in certain districts, but occasionally it is ceremonially hunted and slain annually, while at yearly fairs the goose is sold exclusively and eaten.<sup>693</sup> Elsewhere, *e.g.* in Devon, a ram or lamb is ceremonially slain and eaten, the eating being believed to confer luck.<sup>694</sup> The ill-luck supposed to follow the killing of certain animals may also be reminiscent of totemic tabus. Fish were not eaten by the Pictish Meatae and Caledonii, and a dislike of eating certain fresh-water fish was observed among certain eighteenth century Highlanders.<sup>695</sup> It has been already seen that certain fish living in sacred wells were tabu, and were believed to give oracles. Heron's flesh was disliked in Ireland, and it was considered unlucky to kill a swan in the Hebrides.<sup>696</sup> Fatal results following upon the killing or eating of an animal with which the eater was connected by name or descent are found in the Irish sagas. Conaire was son of a woman and a bird which could take human shape, and it was forbidden to him to hunt birds. On one occasion he did so, and for this as well as the breaking of other tabus, he lost his life.<sup>697</sup> It was tabu to Cúchulainn, "the hound of Culann," to eat dog's flesh, and, having been persuaded to do this, his strength went from him, and he perished. Diarmaid, having been forbidden to hunt a boar with which his



life was connected, was induced by Fionn to break this tabu, and in consequence he lost his life by one of the boar's bristles entering his foot, or (in a variant) by the boar's killing him. Another instance is found in a tale of certain men transformed to badgers. They were slain by Cormac, and brought to his father Tadg to eat. Tadg unaccountably loathed them, because they were transformed men and his cousins.<sup>698</sup> In this tale, which may contain the *débris* of totemic usage, the loathing arises from the fact that the badgers are men—a common form of myths explanatory of misunderstood totemic customs, but the old idea of the relation between a man and his totem is not lost sight of. The other tales may also be reminiscent of a clan totem tabu, later centred in a mythic hero. Perhaps the belief in lucky or unlucky animals, or in omens drawn from their appearance, may be based on old totem beliefs or in beliefs in the divinity of the animals.

(3) *Sacramental eating of an animal.*—The custom of "hunting the wren," found over the whole Celtic area, is connected with animal worship and may be totemistic in origin. In spite of its small size, the wren was known as the king of birds, and in the Isle of Man it was hunted and killed on Christmas or S. Stephen's day. The bird was carried in procession from door to door, to the accompaniment of a chant, and was then solemnly buried, dirges being sung. In some cases a feather was left at each house and carefully treasured, and there are traces of a custom of boiling and eating the bird.<sup>699</sup> In Ireland, the hunt and procession were followed by a feast, the materials of which were collected from house to house, and a similar usage obtained in France, where the youth who killed the bird was called "king."<sup>700</sup> In most of these districts it was considered unlucky or dangerous to kill the bird at any other time, yet it might be ceremonially killed once a year, the dead animal conferred luck, and was solemnly eaten or buried with signs of mourning. Similar customs with animals which are actually worshipped are found elsewhere,<sup>701</sup> and they lend support to the idea that the Celts regarded the wren as a divine animal, or perhaps a totem animal, that it was necessary to slay it ritually, and to carry it round the houses of the community to obtain its divine influence, to eat it sacramentally or to bury it. Probably like customs were followed in the case

of other animals,<sup>702</sup> and these may have given rise to such stories as that of the eating of MacDatho's wonderful boar, as well as to myths which regarded certain animals, *e.g.* the swine, as the immortal food of the gods. Other examples of ritual survivals of such sacramental eating have already been noted, and it is not improbable that the eating of a sacred pastoral animal occurred at Samhain.

(4) *Exogamy*.—Exogamy and the counting of descent through the mother are closely connected with totemism, and some traces of both are found among the Celts. Among the Picts, who were, perhaps, a Celtic group of the Brythonic stock, these customs survived in the royal house. The kingship passed to a brother of the king by the same mother, or to a sister's son, while the king's father was never king and was frequently a "foreigner." Similar rules of succession prevailed in early Aryan royal houses—Greek and Roman,—and may, as Dr. Stokes thought, have existed at Tara in Ireland, while in a Fian tale of Oisín he marries the daughter of the king of Tír na n-Og, and succeeds him as king partly for that reason, and partly because he had beaten him in the annual race for the kingship.<sup>703</sup> Such an athletic contest for the kingship was known in early Greece, and this tale may support the theory of the Celtic priest-kingship, the holder of the office retaining it as long as he was not defeated or slain. Traces of succession through a sister's son are found in the *Mabinogion*, and Livy describes how the mythic Celtic king Ambicatus sent not his own but his sister's sons to found new kingdoms.<sup>704</sup> Irish and Welsh divine and heroic groups are named after the mother, not the father—the children of Danu and of Dôn, and the men of Domnu. Anu is mother of the gods, Buanann of heroes. The eponymous ancestor of the Scots is a woman, Scota, and the earliest colonisers of Ireland are women, not men. In the sagas gods and heroes have frequently a matronymic, and the father's name is omitted—Lug mac Ethnend, Conchobar mac Nessa, Indech, son of De Domnann, Corpre, son of Etain, and others. Perhaps parallel to this is the custom of calling men after their wives—*e.g.* the son of Fergus is Fer Tlachtga, Tlachtga's husband.<sup>705</sup> In the sagas, females (goddesses and heroines) have a high place accorded to them, and frequently choose their own lovers or

husbands—customs suggestive of the matriarchate. Thus what was once a general practice was later confined to the royal house or told of divine or heroic personages. Possibly certain cases of incest may really be exaggerated accounts of misunderstood unions once permissible by totemic law. Cæsar speaks of British polyandry, brothers, sons, and fathers sharing a wife in common.<sup>706</sup> Strabo speaks of Irish unions with mothers and sisters, perhaps referring not to actual practice but to reports of saga tales of incest.<sup>707</sup> Dio Cassius speaks of community of wives among the Caledonians and Meataë, and Jerome says much the same of the Scoti and Atecotti.<sup>708</sup> These notices, with the exception of Cæsar's, are vague, yet they refer to marriage customs different from those known to their reporters. In Irish sagas incest legends circle round the descendants of Etain—fathers unite with daughters, a son with his mother, a woman has a son by her three brothers (just as Ecne was son of Brian, Iuchar, and Iucharba), and is also mother of Crimthan by that son.<sup>709</sup> Brother and sister unions occur both in Irish and Welsh story.<sup>710</sup>

In these cases incest with a mother cannot be explained by totemic usage, but the cases may be distorted reminiscences of what might occur under totemism, namely, a son taking the wives of his father other than his own mother, when those were of a different totem from his own. Under totemism, brothers and sisters by different mothers having different totems, might possibly unite, and such unions are found in many mythologies. Later, when totemism passed away, the unions, regarded with horror, would be supposed to take place between children by the same mother. According to totem law, a father might unite with his daughter, since she was of her mother's totem, but in practice this was frowned upon. Polygamy also may co-exist with totemism, and of course involves the counting of descent through the mother as a rule. If, as is suggested by the "debility" of the Ultonians, and by other evidence, the couvade was a Celtic institution, this would also point to the existence of the matriarchate with the Celts. To explain all this as pre-Aryan, or to say that the classical notices refer to non-Aryan tribes and that the evidence in the Irish sagas only shows that the Celts had been influenced by the customs of aboriginal tribes among whom

they lived,<sup>711</sup> is to neglect the fact that the customs are closely bound up with Celtic life, while it leaves unexplained the influence of such customs upon a people whose own customs, according to this theory, were so totally different. The evidence, taken as a whole, points to the existence of totemism among the early Celts, or, at all events, of the elements which elsewhere compose it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Celtic animal worship dates back to the primitive hunting and pastoral period, when men worshipped the animals which they hunted or reared. They may have apologised to the animal hunted and slain—a form of worship, or, where animals were not hunted or were reared and worshipped, one of them may have been slain annually and eaten to obtain its divine power. Care was taken to preserve certain sacred animals which were not hunted, and this led to domestication, the abstinence of earlier generations leading to an increased food supply at a later time, when domesticated animals were freely slain. But the earlier sacramental slaying of such animals survived in the religious aspect of their slaughter at the beginning of winter.<sup>712</sup> The cult of animals was also connected with totemic usage, though at a later stage this cult was replaced by that of anthropomorphic divinities, with the older divine animals as their symbols, sacrificial victims, and the like. This evolution now led to the removal of restrictions upon slaying and eating the animals. On the other hand, the more primitive animal cults may have remained here and there. Animal cults were, perhaps, largely confined to men. With the rise of agriculture mainly as an art in the hands of women, and the consequent cult of the Earth-mother, of fertility and corn-spirits probably regarded as female, the sacramental eating of the divine animal may have led to the slaying and eating of a human or animal victim supposed to embody such a spirit. Later the two cults were bound to coalesce, and the divine animal and the animal embodiment of the vegetation spirit would not be differentiated. On the other hand, when men began to take part in women's fertility cults, the fact

that such spirits were female or were perhaps coming to be regarded as goddesses, may have led men to envisage certain of the anthropomorphic animal divinities as goddesses, since some of these, *e.g.* Epona and Damona, are female. But with the increasing participation of men in agriculture, the spirits or goddesses of fertility would tend to become male, or the consorts or mothers of gods of fertility, though the earlier aspect was never lost sight of, witness the Corn-Mother. The evolution of divine priest-kings would cause them to take the place of the earlier priestesses of these cults, one of whom may have been the divine victim. Yet in local survivals certain cults were still confined to women, and still had their priestesses.<sup>713</sup>

<sup>644.</sup> Reinach, *BF* 66, 244. The bull and three cranes may be a rebus on the name of the bull, *Tarvos Trikarenos*, "the three-headed," or perhaps *Trikeras*, "three-horned."

<sup>645.</sup> Plutarch, *Marius*, 23; Cæsar, vii. 65; D'Arbois, *Les Celtes*, 49.

<sup>646.</sup> Holder, *s.v.* *Tarba*, *Tarouanna*, *Tarvisium*, etc.; D'Arbois, *Les Druides*, 155; S. Greg. *In Glor. Conf.* 48.

<sup>647.</sup> *CIL* xiii. 6017; *RC* xxv. 47; Holder, ii. 528.

<sup>648.</sup> Leahy, ii. 105 f.; Curtin, *MFI* 264, 318; Joyce, *PN* i. 174; Rees, 453. Cf. Ailred, *Life of S. Ninian*, c. 8.

<sup>649.</sup> Jocelyn, *Vita S. Kentig.* c. 24; Rees, 293, 323.

<sup>650.</sup> Tacitus, *Germ.* xlv.; Blanchet, i. 162, 165; Reinach, *BF* 255 f., *CMR* i. 168; Bertrand, *Arch. Celt.* 419.

<sup>651.</sup> Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 268; Reinach, *RC* xxii. 158, *CMR* i. 67.

<sup>652.</sup> Pausan, vii. 17, 18; Johnson, *Journey*, 136.

<sup>653.</sup> Joyce, *SH* ii. 127; *IT* i. 99, 256 (Bricriu's feast and the tale of Macdatho's swine).

<sup>654.</sup> Strabo, iv. 4. 3, says these swine attacked strangers. Varro, *de Re Rustica*, ii. 4, admires their vast size. Cf. Polyb. ii. 4.

<sup>655.</sup> The hunt is first mentioned in Nennius, c. 79, and then appears as a full-blown folk-tale in *Kulhwych*, Loth, i. 185 f. Here the boar is a transformed prince.

<sup>656.</sup> I have already suggested, p. 106, *supra*, that the places where Gwydion halted with the swine of Elysium were sites of a swine-cult.

<sup>657.</sup> *RC* xiii. 451. Cf. also *TOS* vi. "The Enchanted Pigs of Oengus," and Campbell, *LF* 53.

<sup>658.</sup> *L'Anthropologie*, vi. 584; Greenwell, *British Barrows*, 274, 283, 454; *Arch. Rev.* ii. 120.

<sup>659.</sup> *Rev. Arch.* 1897, 313.

- [660.](#) Reinach, "Zagreus le serpent cornu," *Rev. Arch.* xxxv. 210.
- [661.](#) Reinach, *BF* 185; Bertrand, 316.
- [662.](#) "Cúchulainn's Sick-bed," D'Arbois, v. 202.
- [663.](#) See Reinach, *CMR* i. 57.
- [664.](#) *CIL* xiii. 5160, xii. 2199. Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, however, derives Artaios from *ar*, "ploughed land," and equates the god with Mercurius Cultor.
- [665.](#) *CIL* xii. 1556-1558; D'Arbois, *RC* x. 165.
- [666.](#) For all these place and personal names, see Holder and D'Arbois, *op. cit. Les Celtes*, 47 f., *Les Druides*, 157 f.
- [667.](#) See p. 32, *supra*; Reinach, *CMR* i. 72, *Rev. Arch.* ii. 123.
- [668.](#) O'Grady, ii. 123.
- [669.](#) Epona is fully discussed by Reinach in his *Epona*, 1895, and in articles (illustrated) in *Rev. Arch.* vols. 26, 33, 35, 40, etc. See also ii. 1898, 190.
- [670.](#) Reinach suggests that this may explain why Vercingetorix, in view of siege by the Romans, sent away his horses. They were too sacred to be eaten. Cæsar, vii. 71; Reinach, *RC* xxvii. 1 f.
- [671.](#) Juvenal, viii. 154; Apul. *Metam.* iii. 27; Min. Felix, *Octav.* xxvii. 7.
- [672.](#) For the inscriptions, see Holder, s.v. "Epona."
- [673.](#) *CIL* iii. 7904.
- [674.](#) *CIL* xiii. 3071; Reinach, *BF* 253, *CMR* i. 64, *Répert. de la Stat.* ii. 745; Holder, ii. 651-652.
- [675.](#) Granger, *Worship of the Romans*, 113; Kennedy, 135.
- [676.](#) Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* 49, 619, 657, 661-664.
- [677.](#) Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup>, ii. 281, 315.
- [678.](#) Cæsar, v. 21, 27. Possibly the Dea Bibracte of the Aeduans was a beaver goddess.
- [679.](#) O'Curry, *MC* ii. 207; Elton, 298.
- [680.](#) Girald. Cambr. *Top. Hib.* ii. 19, *RC* ii. 202; *Folk-Lore*, v. 310; *IT* iii. 376.
- [681.](#) O'Grady, ii. 286, 538; Campbell, *The Fians*, 78; Thiers, *Traité des Superstitions*, ii. 86.
- [682.](#) Lady Guest, ii. 409 f.
- [683.](#) Blanchet, i. 166, 295, 326, 390.
- [684.](#) See p. 209, *supra*.
- [685.](#) Diod. Sic. v. 30; *IT* iii. 385; *RC* xxvi. 139; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 593.
- [686.](#) *Man. Hist. Brit.* p. x.
- [687.](#) Herodian, iii. 14, 8; Duald MacFirbis in Irish *Nennius*, p. vii; Cæsar, v. 10; *ZCP* iii. 331.
- [688.](#) See Reinach, "Les Carnassiers androphages dans l'art gallo-romain," *CMR* i. 279.

- [689](#). See Holder, *s.v.*
- [690](#). Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *CB*<sup>4</sup> 267.
- [691](#). Cæsar, v. 12.
- [692](#). Dio Cassius, lxii. 2.
- [693](#). See a valuable paper by N.W. Thomas, "Survivance du Culte des Animaux dans le Pays de Galles," in *Rev. de l'Hist. des Religions*, xxxviii. 295 f., and a similar paper by Gomme, *Arch. Rev.* 1889, 217 f. Both writers seem to regard these cults as pre-Celtic.
- [694](#). Gomme, *Ethnol. in Folklore*, 30, *Village Community*, 113.
- [695](#). Dio Cass. lxxii. 21; Logan, *Scottish Gael*, ii. 12.
- [696](#). Joyce, *SH* ii. 529; Martin, 71.
- [697](#). *RC* xxii. 20, 24, 390-1.
- [698](#). *IT* iii. 385.
- [699](#). Waldron, *Isle of Man*, 49; Train, *Account of the Isle of Man*, ii. 124.
- [700](#). Vallancey, *Coll. de Reb. Hib.* iv. No. 13; Clément, *Fêtes*, 466. For English customs, see Henderson, *Folklore of the Northern Counties*, 125.
- [701](#). Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup>, ii. 380, 441, 446.
- [702](#). For other Welsh instances of the danger of killing certain birds, see Thomas, *op. cit.* xxxviii. 306.
- [703](#). Frazer, *Kingship*, 261; Stokes, *RC* xvi. 418; Larminie, *Myths and Folk-tales*, 327.
- [704](#). See Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *Welsh People*, 44; Livy, v. 34.
- [705](#). Cf. *IT* iii. 407, 409.
- [706](#). Cæsar, v. 14.
- [707](#). Strabo, iv. 5. 4.
- [708](#). Dio Cass. lxxvi. 12; Jerome, *Adv. Jovin.* ii. 7. Giraldus has much to say of incest in Wales, probably actual breaches of moral law among a barbarous people (*Descr. Wales*, ii. 6).
- [709](#). *RC* xii. 235, 238, xv. 291, xvi. 149; *LL* 23*a*, 124*b*. In various Irish texts a child is said to have three fathers—probably a reminiscence of polyandry. See p. 74, *supra*, and *RC* xxiii. 333.
- [710](#). *IT* i. 136; Loth, i. 134 f.; Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *HL* 308.
- [711](#). Zimmer, "Matriarchy among the Picts," in Henderson, *Leadbhar nan Gleann*.
- [712](#). See p. 259, *infra*.
- [713](#). See p. 274, *infra*.



# Cosmogony

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Whether the early Celts regarded Heaven and Earth as husband and wife is uncertain. Such a conception is world-wide, and myth frequently explains in different ways the reason of the separation of the two. Among the Polynesians the children of heaven and earth—the winds, forests, and seas personified—angry at being crushed between their parents in darkness, rose up and separated them. This is in effect the Greek myth of Uranus, or Heaven, and Gæa, or Earth, divorced by their son Kronos, just as in Hindu myth Dyaus, or Sky, and Prithivi, or Earth, were separated by Indra. Uranus in Greece gave place to Zeus, and, in India, Dyaus became subordinate to Indra. Thus the primitive Heaven personified recedes, and his place is taken by a more individualised god. But generally Mother Earth remains a constant quantity. Earth was nearer man and was more unchanging than the inconstant sky, while as the producer of the fruits of the earth, she was regarded as the source of all things, and frequently remained as an important divinity when a crowd of other divinities became prominent. This is especially true of agricultural peoples, who propitiate Earth with sacrifice, worship her with orgiastic rites, or assist her processes by magic. With advancing civilisation such a goddess is still remembered as the friend of man, and, as in the Eleusinia, is represented sorrowing and rejoicing like man himself. Or where a higher religion ousts the older one, the ritual is still retained among the folk, though its meaning may be forgotten.

The Celts may thus have possessed the Heaven and Earth myth, but all trace of it has perished. There are, however, remnants of myths showing how the sky is supported by trees, a mountain, or by pillars. A high mountain near the sources of the Rhone was called "the column of the sun," and was so lofty as to hide the sun from the people of the south.<sup>714</sup> It may have been regarded as supporting the sky, while the sun moved round it. In an old Irish hymn and its gloss, Brigit and Patrick are compared to the two pillars of the world, probably alluding to some old myth of sky or earth



resting on pillars.<sup>715</sup> Traces of this also exist in folk-belief, as in the accounts of islands resting on four pillars, or as in the legend of the church of Kernitou which rests on four pillars on a congealed sea and which will be submerged when the sea liquefies—a combination of the cosmogonic myth with that of a great inundation.<sup>716</sup> In some mythologies a bridge or ladder connects heaven and earth. There may be a survival of some such myth in an Irish poem which speaks of the *drochet bethad*, or "bridge of life," or in the *drochaid na flaitheanas*, or "bridge of heaven," of Hebridean folklore.<sup>717</sup>

Those gods who were connected with the sky may have been held to dwell there or on the mountain supporting it. Others, like the Celtic Dispater, dwelt underground. Some were connected with mounds and hills, or were supposed to have taken up their abode in them. Others, again, dwelt in a distant region, the Celtic Elysium, which, once the Celts reached the sea, became a far-off island. Those divinities worshipped in groves were believed to dwell there and to manifest themselves at midday or midnight, while such objects of nature as rivers, wells, and trees were held to be the abode of gods or spirits. Thus it is doubtful whether the Celts ever thought of their gods as dwelling in one Olympus. The Tuatha Dé Danann are said to have come from heaven, but this may be the mere assertion of some scribe who knew not what to make of this group of beings.

In Celtic belief men were not so much created by gods as descended from them. "All the Gauls assert that they are descended from Dispater, and this, they say, has been handed down to them by the Druids."<sup>718</sup> Dispater was a Celtic underworld god of fertility, and the statement probably presupposes a myth, like that found among many primitive peoples, telling how men once lived underground and thence came to the surface of the earth. But it also points to their descent from the god of the underworld. Thither the dead returned to him who was ancestor of the living as well as lord of the dead.<sup>719</sup> On the other hand, if the earth had originally been thought of as a female, she as Earth-mother would be ancestress of men. But her place in the myth would easily be taken by the Earth or Under-earth god, perhaps regarded as her son or her consort. In other cases, clans,

families, or individuals often traced their descent to gods or divine animals or plants. Classical writers occasionally speak of the origin of branches of the Celtic race from eponymous founders, perhaps from their knowledge of existing Celtic myths.<sup>720</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus also reports a Druidic tradition to the effect that some Gauls were indigenous, some had come from distant islands, and others from beyond the Rhine.<sup>721</sup> But this is not so much a myth of origins, as an explanation of the presence of different peoples in Gaul—the aborigines, the Celtæ, and the Belgic Gauls. M. D'Arbois assumes that "distant islands" means the Celtic Elysium, which he regards as the land of the dead,<sup>722</sup> but the phrase is probably no more than a distorted reminiscence of the far-off lands whence early groups of Celts had reached Gaul.

Of the creation of the world no complete myth has survived, though from a gloss to the *Senchus Mór* we learn that the Druids, like the Br=ahmans, boasted that they had made sun, moon, earth, and sea—a boast in keeping with their supposed powers over the elements.<sup>723</sup> Certain folk-beliefs, regarding the origin of different parts of nature, bear a close resemblance to primitive cosmogonic myths, and they may be taken as *disjecta membra* of similar myths held by the Celts and perhaps taught by the Druids. Thus sea, rivers, or springs arose from the micturition of a giant, fairy, or saint, or from their sweat or blood. Islands are rocks cast by giants, and mountains are the material thrown up by them as they were working on the earth. Wells sprang up from the blood of a martyr or from the touch of a saint's or a fairy's staff.<sup>724</sup> The sea originated from a magic cask given by God to a woman. The spigot, when opened, could not be closed again, and the cask never ceased running until the waters covered the earth—a tale with savage parallels.<sup>725</sup> In all these cases, giant, saint, or fairy has doubtless taken the place of a god, since the stories have a very primitive *facies*. The giant is frequently Gargantua, probably himself once a divinity. Other references in Irish texts point to the common cosmogonic myth of the earth having gradually assumed its present form. Thus many new lakes and plains are said to have been formed in Ireland during the time of Partholan

and Nemed, the plains being apparently built up out of existing materials.<sup>726</sup> In some cases the formation of a lake was the result of digging the grave of some personage after whom the lake was then named.<sup>727</sup> Here we come upon the familiar idea of the danger of encroaching on the domain of a deity, *e.g.* that of the Earth-god, by digging the earth, with the consequent punishment by a flood. The same conception is found in Celtic stories of a lake or river formed from the overflowing of a sacred well through human carelessness or curiosity, which led to the anger of the divinity of the well.<sup>728</sup> Or, again, a town or castle is submerged on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants, the waters being produced by the curse of God or a saint (replacing a pagan god) and forming a lake.<sup>729</sup> These may be regarded as forms of a Celtic deluge-myth, which in one case, that of the Welsh story of the ship of Nevyd, which saved Dwyvan and Dwyfach and a pair of all kinds of animals when Lake Llion overflowed, has apparently borrowed from the Biblical story.<sup>730</sup> In other cases lakes are formed from the tears of a god, *e.g.* Manannan, whose tears at the death of his son formed three lochs in Erin.<sup>731</sup> Apollonius reports that the waters of Eridanus originated from the tears of Apollo when driven from heaven by his father.<sup>732</sup> This story, which he says is Celtic, has been clothed by him in a Greek form, and the god in question may have been Belenos, equated with Apollo. Sometimes the formation of streams was ascribed to great hail-storms—an evident mythic rendering of the damage done by actual spates, while the Irish myths of "illimitable sea-bursts," of which three particular instances are often mentioned, were doubtless the result of the experience of tidal waves.

Although no complete account of the end of all things, like that of the Scandinavian Ragnarok, has survived, scattered hints tell of its former existence. Strabo says that the Druids taught that "fire and water must one day prevail"—an evident belief in some final cataclysm.<sup>733</sup> This is also hinted at in the words of certain Gauls to Alexander, telling him that what they feared most of all was the fall of the heavens upon their heads.<sup>734</sup> In other words, they feared what would be the signal of the end of all things.

On Irish ground the words of Conchobar may refer to this. He announced that he would rescue the captives and spoil taken by Medb, unless the heavens fell, and the earth burst open, and the sea engulfed all things.<sup>735</sup> Such a myth mingled with Christian beliefs may underlie the prophecy of Badb after Mag-tured regarding the evils to come and the end of the world, and that of Fercertne in the *Colloquy of the Two Sages*.<sup>736</sup> Both have a curious resemblance to the Sybil's prophecy of doom in the *Voluspa*. If the gods themselves were involved in such a catastrophe, it would not be surprising, since in some aspects their immortality depended on their eating and drinking immortal food and drink.<sup>737</sup>

<sup>714</sup>. Avienus, *Ora Maritima*, 644 f.

<sup>715</sup>. *IT* i. 25; Gaidoz, *ZCP* i. 27.

<sup>716</sup>. *Annales de Bretagne*, x. 414.

<sup>717</sup>. *IT* i. 50, cf. 184; *Folk-Lore*, vi. 170.

<sup>718</sup>. Cæsar, vi. 18.

<sup>719</sup>. See p. 341, *infra*.

<sup>720</sup>. Diod. Sic. v. 24; Appian, *Illyrica*, 2.

<sup>721</sup>. Amm. Marcel, xv. 9.

<sup>722</sup>. D'Arbois, ii. 262, xii. 220.

<sup>723</sup>. *Antient Laws of Ireland*, i. 23. In one MS. Adam is said to have been created thus—his body of earth, his blood of the sea, his face of the sun, his breath of the wind, etc. This is also found in a Frisian tale (Vigfusson-Powell, *Corpus Poet. Bor.* i. 479), and both stories present an inversion of well-known myths about the creation of the universe from the members of a giant.

<sup>724</sup>. Sébillot, i. 213 f., ii. 6, 7, 72, 97, 176, 327-328. Cf. *RC* xv. 482, xvi. 152.

<sup>725</sup>. Sébillot, ii. 6.

<sup>726</sup>. *LL* 56; Keating, 117, 123.

<sup>727</sup>. *RC* xv. 429, xvi. 277.

<sup>728</sup>. See p. 191, *supra*.

<sup>729</sup>. Sébillot, ii. 41 f., 391, 397; see p. 372, *infra*.

<sup>730</sup>. *Triads* in Loth, ii. 280, 299; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 583, 663.

<sup>731</sup>. *RC* xvi. 50, 146.

<sup>732</sup>. Apoll. iv. 609 f.

[733.](#) Strabo, iv. 4. 4.

[734.](#) Arrian, *Anab.* i. 4. 7; Strabo, vii. 3. 8. Cf. Jullian, 85.

[735.](#) *LL* 94; Miss Hull, 205.

[736.](#) *RC* xii. 111, xxvi. 33.

[737.](#) A possible survival of a world-serpent myth may be found in "Da Derga's Hostel" (*RC* xxii. 54), where we hear of Leviathan that surrounds the globe and strikes with his tail to overwhelm the world. But this may be a reflection of Norse myths of the Midgard serpent, sometimes equated with Leviathan.

# Sacrifice, Prayer, and Divination

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The Semites are often considered the worst offenders in the matter of human sacrifice, but in this, according to classical evidence, they were closely rivalled by the Celts of Gaul. They offered human victims on the principle of a life for a life, or to propitiate the gods, or in order to divine the future from the entrails of the victim. We shall examine the Celtic custom of human sacrifice from these points of view first.

Cæsar says that those afflicted with disease or engaged in battle or danger offer human victims or vow to do so, because unless man's life be given for man's life, the divinity of the gods cannot be appeased.<sup>738</sup> The theory appears to have been that the gods sent disease or ills when they desired a human life, but that any life would do; hence one in danger might escape by offering another in his stead. In some cases the victims may have been offered to disease demons or diseases personified, such as Celtic imagination still believes in,<sup>739</sup> rather than to gods, or, again, they may have been offered to native gods of healing. Coming danger could also be averted on the same principle, and though the victims were usually slaves, in times of great peril wives and children were sacrificed.<sup>740</sup> After a defeat, which showed that the gods were still implacable, the wounded and feeble were slain, or a great leader would offer himself.<sup>741</sup> Or in such a case the Celts would turn their weapons against themselves, making of suicide a kind of sacrifice, hoping to bring victory to the survivors.<sup>742</sup>

The idea of the victim being offered on the principle of a life for a life is illustrated by a custom at Marseilles in time of pestilence. One of the poorer classes offered himself to be kept at the public expense for some time. He was then led in procession, clad in sacred boughs, and solemnly cursed, and prayer was made that on him might fall the evils of the community. Then he was cast headlong down. Here the victim stood for the lives of the city and was a kind of scape-victim, like those at the Thargelia.<sup>743</sup>

Human victims were also offered by way of thanksgiving after victory, and vows were often made before a battle, promising these as well as part of the spoil. For this reason the Celts would never ransom their captives, but offered them in sacrifice, animals captured being immolated along with them.<sup>744</sup> The method of sacrifice was slaughter by sword or spear, hanging, impaling, dismembering, and drowning. Some gods were propitiated by one particular mode of sacrifice—Taranis by burning, Teutates by suffocation, Esus (perhaps a tree-god) by hanging on a tree. Drowning meant devoting the victim to water-divinities.<sup>745</sup>

Other propitiatory sacrifices took place at intervals, and had a general or tribal character, the victims being criminals or slaves or even members of the tribe. The sacrificial pile had the rude outline of a human form, the limbs of osier, enclosing human as well as some animal victims, who perished by fire. Diodorus says that the victims were malefactors who had been kept in prison for five years, and that some of them were impaled.<sup>746</sup> This need not mean that the holocausts were quinquennial, for they may have been offered yearly, at Midsummer, to judge by the ritual of modern survivals.<sup>747</sup> The victims perished in that element by which the sun-god chiefly manifested himself, and by the sacrifice his powers were augmented, and thus growth and fertility were promoted. These holocausts were probably extensions of an earlier slaying of a victim representing the spirit of vegetation, though their value in aiding fertility would be still in evidence. This is suggested by Strabo's words that the greater the number of murders the greater would be the fertility of the land, probably meaning that there would then be more criminals as sacrificial victims.<sup>748</sup> Varro also speaks of human sacrifice to a god equated with Saturn, offered because of all seeds the human race is the best, *i.e.* human victims are most productive of fertility.<sup>749</sup> Thus, looked at in one way, the later rite was a propitiatory sacrifice, in another it was an act of magico-religious ritual springing from the old rite of the divine victim. But from both points of view the intention was the same—the promotion of fertility in field and fold.

Divination with the bodies of human victims is attested by Tacitus, who says that "the Druids consult the gods in the palpitating entrails of men,"



and by Strabo, who describes the striking down of the victim by the sword and the predicting of the future from his convulsive movements.<sup>750</sup> To this we shall return.

Human sacrifice in Gaul was put down by the Romans, who were amazed at its extent, Suetonius summing up the whole religion in a phrase—*druidarum religionem diræ immanitatis*.<sup>751</sup> By the year 40 A.D. it had ceased, though victims were offered symbolically, the Druids pretending to strike them and drawing a little blood from them.<sup>752</sup> Only the pressure of a higher civilisation forced the so-called philosophic Druids to abandon their revolting customs. Among the Celts of Britain human sacrifice still prevailed in 77 A.D.<sup>753</sup> Dio Cassius describes the refinements of cruelty practised on female victims (prisoners of war) in honour of the goddess Andrasta—their breasts cut off and placed over their mouths, and a stake driven through their bodies, which were then hung in the sacred grove.<sup>754</sup> Tacitus speaks of the altars in Mona (Anglesey) laved with human blood. As to the Irish Celts, patriotic writers have refused to believe them guilty of such practices,<sup>755</sup> but there is no *a priori* reason which need set them apart from other races on the same level of civilisation in this custom. The Irish texts no doubt exaggerate the number of the victims, but they certainly attest the existence of the practice. From the *Dindsenchas*, which describes many archaic usages, we learn that "the firstlings of every issue and the chief scions of every clan" were offered to Cromm Cruaich—a sacrifice of the first-born,—and that at one festival the prostrations of the worshippers were so violent that three-fourths of them perished, not improbably an exaggerated memory of orgiastic rites.<sup>756</sup> Dr. Joyce thinks that these notices are as incredible as the mythic tales in the *Dindsenchas*. Yet the tales were doubtless quite credible to the pagan Irish, and the ritual notices are certainly founded on fact. Dr. Joyce admits the existence of foundation sacrifices in Ireland, and it is difficult to understand why human victims may not have been offered on other occasions also.

The purpose of the sacrifice, namely, fertility, is indicated in the poetical version of the cult of Cromm—



"Milk and corn  
They would ask from him speedily,  
In return for one-third of their healthy issue."<sup>757</sup>

The Nemedian sacrifice to the Fomorian is said to have been two-thirds of their children and of the year's supply of corn and milk<sup>758</sup>—an obvious misunderstanding, the victims really being offered to obtain corn and milk. The numbers are exaggerated,<sup>759</sup> but there can be no doubt as to the nature of the sacrifice—the offering of an agricultural folk to the divinities who helped or retarded growth. Possibly part of the flesh of the victims, at one time identified with the god, was buried in the fields or mixed with the seed-corn, in order to promote fertility. The blood was sprinkled on the image of the god. Such practices were as obnoxious to Christian missionaries as they had been to the Roman Government, and we learn that S. Patrick preached against "the slaying of yoke oxen and milch cows and the burning of the first-born progeny" at the Fair of Tailte.<sup>760</sup> As has been seen, the Irish version of the Perseus and Andromeda story, in which the victim is offered not to a dragon, but to the Fomorian, may have received this form from actual ritual in which human victims were sacrificed to the Fomorian.<sup>761</sup> In a Japanese version of the same story the maiden is offered to the sea-gods. Another tale suggests the offering of human victims to remove blight. In this case the land suffers from blight because the adulteress Becuma, married to the king of Erin, has pretended to be a virgin. The Druids announced that the remedy was to slay the son of an undefiled couple and sprinkle the doorposts and the land with his blood. Such a youth was found, but at his mother's request a two-bellied cow, in which two birds were found, was offered in his stead.<sup>762</sup> In another instance in the *Dindsenchas*, hostages, including the son of a captive prince, are offered to remove plagues—an equivalent to the custom of the Gauls.<sup>763</sup>

Human sacrifices were also offered when the foundation of a new building was laid. Such sacrifices are universal, and are offered to propitiate the Earth spirits or to provide a ghostly guardian for the building. A Celtic legend attaches such a sacrifice to the founding of the monastery at Iona. S.

Oran agrees to adopt S. Columba's advice "to go under the clay of this island to hallow it," and as a reward he goes straight to heaven.<sup>764</sup> The legend is a semi-Christian form of the memory of an old pagan custom, and it is attached to Oran probably because he was the first to be buried in the island. In another version, nothing is said of the sacrifice. The two saints are disputing about the other world, and Oran agrees to go for three days into the grave to settle the point at issue. At the end of that time the grave is opened, and the triumphant Oran announces that heaven and hell are not such as they are alleged to be. Shocked at his latitudinarian sentiments, Columba ordered earth to be piled over him, lest he cause a scandal to the faith, and Oran was accordingly buried alive.<sup>765</sup> In a Welsh instance, Vortigern's castle cannot be built, for the stones disappear as soon as they are laid. Wise men, probably Druids, order the sacrifice of a child born without a father, and the sprinkling of the site with his blood.<sup>766</sup> "Groaning hostages" were placed under a fort in Ireland, and the foundation of the palace of Emain Macha was also laid with a human victim.<sup>767</sup> Many similar legends are connected with buildings all over the Celtic area, and prove the popularity of the pagan custom. The sacrifice of human victims on the funeral pile will be discussed in a later chapter.

Of all these varieties of human sacrifice, those offered for fertility, probably at Beltane or Midsummer, were the most important. Their propitiatory nature is of later origin, and their real intention was to strengthen the divinity by whom the processes of growth were directed. Still earlier, one victim represented the divinity, slain that his life might be revived in vigour. The earth was sprinkled with his blood and fed with his flesh in order to fertilise it, and possibly the worshippers partook sacramentally of the flesh. Propitiatory holocausts of human victims had taken the place of the slain representative of a god, but their value in promoting fertility was not forgotten. The sacramental aspect of the rite is perhaps to be found in Pliny's words regarding "the slaying of a human being as a most religious act and eating the flesh as a wholesome remedy" among the Britons.<sup>768</sup> This may merely refer to "medicinal cannibalism," such as still survives in Italy, but the passage rather suggests sacramental

cannibalism, the eating of part of a divine victim, such as existed in Mexico and elsewhere. Other acts of cannibalism are referred to by classical writers. Diodorus says the Irish ate their enemies, and Pausanias describes the eating the flesh and drinking the blood of children among the Galatian Celts. Drinking out of a skull the blood of slain (sacrificial) enemies is mentioned by Ammianus and Livy, and Solinus describes the Irish custom of bathing the face in the blood of the slain and drinking it.<sup>769</sup> In some of these cases the intention may simply have been to obtain the dead enemy's strength, but where a sacrificial victim was concerned, the intention probably went further than this. The blood of dead relatives was also drunk in order to obtain their virtues, or to be brought into closer *rapprochement* with them.<sup>770</sup> This is analogous to the custom of blood brotherhood, which also existed among the Celts and continued as a survival in the Western Isles until a late date.<sup>771</sup>

One group of Celtic human sacrifices was thus connected with primitive agricultural ritual, but the warlike energies of the Celts extended the practice. Victims were easily obtained, and offered to the gods of war. Yet even these sacrifices preserved some trace of the older rite, in which the victim represented a divinity or spirit.

Head-hunting, described in classical writings and in Irish texts, had also a sacrificial aspect. The heads of enemies were hung at the saddle-bow or fixed on spears, as the conquerors returned home with songs of victory.<sup>772</sup> This gruesome picture often recurs in the texts. Thus, after the death of Cúchulainn, Conall Cernach returned to Emer with the heads of his slayers strung on a withy. He placed each on a stake and told Emer the name of the owner. A Celtic *oppidum* or a king's palace must have been as gruesome as a Dayak or Solomon Island village. Everywhere were stakes crowned with heads, and the walls of houses were adorned with them. Poseidonius tells how he sickened at such a sight, but gradually became more accustomed to it.<sup>773</sup> A room in the palace was sometimes a store for such heads, or they were preserved in cedar-wood oil or in coffers. They were proudly shown to strangers as a record of conquest, but they could not be sold for their weight in gold.<sup>774</sup> After a battle a pile of heads was made and the number of the

slain was counted, and at annual festivals warriors produced the tongues of enemies as a record of their prowess.<sup>775</sup>

These customs had a religious aspect. In cutting off a head the Celt saluted the gods, and the head was offered to them or to ancestral spirits, and sometimes kept in grove or temple.<sup>776</sup> The name given to the heads of the slain in Ireland, the "mast of Macha," shows that they were dedicated to her, just as skulls found under an altar had been devoted to the Celtic Mars.<sup>777</sup> Probably, as among Dayaks, American Indians, and others, possession of a head was a guarantee that the ghost of its owner would be subservient to its Celtic possessor, either in this world or in the next, since they are sometimes found buried in graves along with the dead.<sup>778</sup> Or, suspended in temples, they became an actual and symbolical offering of the life of their owners, if, as is probable, the life or soul was thought to be in the head. Hence, too, the custom of drinking from the skull of the slain had the intention of transferring his powers directly to the drinker.<sup>779</sup> Milk drunk from the skull of Conall Cernach restored to enfeebled warriors their pristine strength,<sup>780</sup> and a folk-survival in the Highlands—that of drinking from the skull of a suicide (here taking the place of the slain enemy) in order to restore health—shows the same idea at work. All these practices had thus one end, that of the transference of spirit force—to the gods, to the victor who suspended the head from his house, and to all who drank from the skull. Represented in bas-relief on houses or carved on dagger-handles, the head may still have been thought to possess talismanic properties, giving power to house or weapon. Possibly this cult of human heads may have given rise to the idea of a divine head like those figured on Gaulish images, or described, *e.g.*, in the story of Bran. His head preserved the land from invasion, until Arthur disinterred it,<sup>781</sup> the story being based on the belief that heads or bodies of great warriors still had a powerful influence.<sup>782</sup> The representation of the head of a god, like his whole image, would be thought to possess the same preservative power.

A possible survival of the sacrifice of the aged may be found in a Breton custom of applying a heavy club to the head of old persons to

lighten their death agonies, the clubs having been formerly used to kill them. They are kept in chapels, and are regarded with awe.<sup>783</sup>

Animal victims were also frequently offered. The Galatian Celts made a yearly sacrifice to their Artemis of a sheep, goat, or calf, purchased with money laid by for each animal caught in the chase. Their dogs were feasted and crowned with flowers.<sup>784</sup> Further details of this ritual are unfortunately lacking. Animals captured in war were sacrificed to the war-gods by the Gauls, or to a river-god, as when the horses of the defeated host were thrown into the Rhine by the Gaulish conquerors of Mallius.<sup>785</sup> We have seen that the white oxen sacrificed at the mistletoe ritual may once have been representatives of the vegetation-spirit, which also animated the oak and the mistletoe. Among the insular Celts animal sacrifices are scarcely mentioned in the texts, probably through suppression by later scribes, but the lives of Irish saints contain a few notices of the custom, *e.g.* that of S. Patrick, which describes the gathering of princes, chiefs, and Druids at Tara to sacrifice victims to idols.<sup>786</sup> In Ireland the peasantry still kill a sheep or heifer for S. Martin on his festival, and ill-luck is thought to follow the non-observance of the rite.<sup>787</sup> Similar sacrifices on saints' days in Scotland and Wales occurred in Christian times.<sup>788</sup> An excellent instance is that of the sacrifice of bulls at Gairloch for the cure of lunatics on S. Maelrubha's day (August 25th). Libations of milk were also poured out on the hills, ruined chapels were perambulated, wells and stones worshipped, and divination practised. These rites, occurring in the seventeenth century, were condemned by the Presbytery of Dingwall, but with little effect, and some of them still survive.<sup>789</sup> In all these cases the saint has succeeded to the ritual of an earlier god. Mr. Cook surmises that S. Maelrubha was the successor of a divine king connected with an oak and sacred well, the god or spirit of which was incarnate in him. These divine kings may at one time have been slain, or a bull, similarly incarnating the god or spirit, may have been killed as a surrogate. This slaying was at a later time regarded as a sacrifice and connected with the cure of madness.<sup>790</sup> The rite would thus be on a parallel with the slaying of the oxen at the mistletoe gathering, as

already interpreted. Eilean Maree (Maelrubha), where the tree and well still exist, was once known as Eilean mo righ ("the island of my king"), or Eilean a Mhor Righ ("of the great king"), the king having been worshipped as a god. This piece of corroborative evidence was given by the oldest inhabitant to Sir Arthur Mitchell.<sup>791</sup> The people also spoke of the god Mourie.

Other survivals of animal sacrifice are found in cases of cattle-plague, as in Morayshire sixty years ago, in Wales, Devon, and the Isle of Man. The victim was burned and its ashes sprinkled on the herd, or it was thrown into the sea or over a precipice.<sup>792</sup> Perhaps it was both a propitiatory sacrifice and a scape-animal, carrying away the disease, though the rite may be connected with the former slaying of a divine animal whose death benefited all the cattle of the district. In the Hebrides the spirits of earth and air were propitiated every quarter by throwing outside the door a cock, hen, duck, or cat, which was supposed to be seized by them. If the rite was neglected, misfortune was sure to follow. The animal carried away evils from the house, and was also a propitiatory sacrifice.

The blood of victims was sprinkled on altars, images, and trees, or, as among the Boii, it was placed in a skull adorned with gold.<sup>793</sup> Other libations are known mainly from folk-survivals. Thus Breton fishermen salute reefs and jutting promontories, say prayers, and pour a glass of wine or throw a biscuit or an old garment into the sea.<sup>794</sup> In the Hebrides a curious rite was performed on Maundy Thursday. After midnight a man walked into the sea, and poured ale or gruel on the waters, at the same time singing:

"O God of the sea,  
Put weed in the drawing wave,  
To enrich the ground,  
To shower on us food."

Those on shore took up the strain in chorus.<sup>795</sup> Thus the rite was described by one who took part in it a century ago, but Martin, writing in



the seventeenth century, gives other details. The cup of ale was offered with the words, "Shony, I give you this cup of ale, hoping that you will be so kind as to send plenty of seaweed for enriching our ground for the ensuing year." All then went in silence to the church and remained there for a time, after which they indulged in an orgy out-of-doors. This orgiastic rite may once have included the intercourse of the sexes—a powerful charm for fertility. "Shony" was some old sea-god, and another divinity of the sea, Brianniul, was sometimes invoked for the same purpose.<sup>796</sup> Until recently milk was poured on "Gruagach stones" in the Hebrides, as an offering to the Gruagach, a brownie who watched over herds, and who had taken the place of a god.<sup>797</sup>

## PRAYER.

Prayer accompanied most rites, and probably consisted of traditional formulæ, on the exact recital of which depended their value. The Druids invoked a god during the mistletoe rite, and at a Galatian sacrifice, offered to bring birds to destroy grasshoppers, prayer was made to the birds themselves.<sup>798</sup> In Mona, at the Roman invasion, the Druids raised their arms and uttered prayers for deliverance, at the same time cursing the invaders, and Boudicca invoked the protection of the goddess Andrasta in a similar manner.<sup>799</sup> Chants were sung by the "priestesses" of Sena to raise storms, and they were also sung by warriors both before and after a battle, to the accompaniment of a measured dance and the clashing of arms.<sup>800</sup> These warrior chants were composed by bards, and probably included invocations of the war-gods and the recital of famous deeds. They may also have been of the nature of spells ensuring the help of the gods, like the war-cries uttered by a whole army to the sound of trumpets.<sup>801</sup> These consisted of the name of a god, of a tribe or clan, or of some well-known phrase. As the recital of a divine name is often supposed to force the god to help, these cries had thus a magical aspect, while they also struck terror into the foe.<sup>802</sup> Warriors also advanced dancing to the fray, and they are depicted on coins dancing on horseback or before a sword, which was worshipped by the

Celts.<sup>[803](#)</sup> The Celtiberian festival at the full moon consisted entirely of dancing. The dance is a primitive method of expressing religious emotion, and where it imitates certain actions, it is intended by magical influence to crown the actions themselves with success. It is thus a kind of acted prayer with magical results.

## **DIVINATION.**

A special class of diviners existed among the Celts, but the Druids practised divination, as did also the unofficial layman. Classical writers speak of the Celts as of all nations the most devoted to, and the most experienced in, the science of divination. Divination with a human victim is described by Diodorus. Libations were poured over him, and he was then slain, auguries being drawn from the method of his fall, the movements of his limbs, and the flowing of his blood. Divination with the entrails was used in Galatia, Gaul, and Britain.<sup>[804](#)</sup> Beasts and birds also provided omens. The course taken by a hare let loose gave an omen of success to the Britons, and in Ireland divination was used with a sacrificial animal.<sup>[805](#)</sup> Among birds the crow was pre-eminent, and two crows are represented speaking into the ears of a man on a bas-relief at Compiègne. The Celts believed that the crow had shown where towns should be founded, or had furnished a remedy against poison, and it was also an arbiter of disputes.<sup>[806](#)</sup> Artemidorus describes how, at a certain place, there were two crows. Persons having a dispute set out two heaps of sweetmeats, one for each disputant. The birds swooped down upon them, eating one and dispersing the other. He whose heap had been scattered won the case.<sup>[807](#)</sup> Birds were believed to have guided the migrating Celts, and their flight furnished auguries, because, as Deiotaurus gravely said, birds never lie. Divination by the voices of birds was used by the Irish Druids.<sup>[808](#)</sup>

Omens were drawn from the direction of the smoke and flames of sacred fires and from the condition of the clouds.<sup>[809](#)</sup> Wands of yew were carried by Druids—"the wand of Druidism" of many folk-tales—and were used perhaps as divining-rods. Ogams were also engraved on rods of yews,



and from these Druids divined hidden things. By this means the Druid Dalan discovered where Etain had been hidden by the god Mider. The method used may have been that of drawing one of the rods by lot and then divining from the marks upon it. A similar method was used to discover the route to be taken by invaders, the result being supposed to depend on divine interposition.<sup>810</sup> The knowledge of astronomy ascribed by Cæsar to the Druids was probably of a simple kind, and much mixed with astrology, and though it furnished the data for computing a simple calendar, its use was largely magical.<sup>811</sup> Irish diviners forecast the time to build a house by the stars, and the date at which S. Columba's education should begin, was similarly discovered.<sup>812</sup>

The *Imbas Forosnai*, "illumination between the hands," was used by the *Filé* to discover hidden things. He chewed a piece of raw flesh and placed it as an offering to the images of the gods whom he desired to help him. If enlightenment did not come by the next day, he pronounced incantations on his palms, which he then placed on his cheeks before falling asleep. The revelation followed in a dream, or sometimes after awaking.<sup>813</sup> Perhaps the animal whose flesh was eaten was a sacred one. Another method was that of the *Teinm Laegha*. The *Filé* made a verse and repeated it over some person or thing regarding which he sought information, or he placed his staff on the person's body and so obtained what he sought. The rite was also preceded by sacrifice; hence S. Patrick prohibited both it and the *Imbas Forosnai*.<sup>814</sup> Another incantation, the *Cétnad*, was sung through the fist to discover the track of stolen cattle or of the thief. If this did not bring enlightenment, the *Filé* went to sleep and obtained the knowledge through a dream.<sup>815</sup> Another *Cétnad* for obtaining information regarding length of life was addressed to the seven daughters of the sea. Perhaps the incantation was repeated mechanically until the seer fell into a kind of trance. Divination by dreams was also used by the continental Celts.<sup>816</sup>

Other methods resemble "trance-utterance." "A great obnubilation was conjured up for the bard so that he slept a heavy sleep, and things magic-begotten were shewn to him to enunciate," apparently in his sleep. This was

called "illumination by rhymes," and a similar method was used in Wales. When consulted, the seer roared violently until he was beside himself, and out of his ravings the desired information was gathered. When aroused from this ecstatic condition, he had no remembrance of what he had uttered. Giraldus reports this, and thinks, with the modern spiritualist, that the utterance was caused by spirits.<sup>817</sup> The resemblance to modern trance-utterance and to similar methods used by savages is remarkable, and psychological science sees in it the promptings of the subliminal self in sleep.

The *taghairm* of the Highlanders was a survival from pagan times. The seer was usually bound in a cow's hide—the animal, it may be conjectured, having been sacrificed in earlier times. He was left in a desolate place, and while he slept spirits were supposed to inspire his dreams.<sup>818</sup> Clothing in the skin of a sacrificial animal, by which the person thus clothed is brought into contact with it and hence with the divinity to which it is offered, or with the divine animal itself where the victim is so regarded, is a widespread custom. Hence, in this Celtic usage, contact with divinity through the hide would be expected to produce enlightenment. For a like reason the Irish sacrificed a sheep for the recovery of the sick, and clothed the patient in its skin.<sup>819</sup> Binding the limbs of the seer is also a widespread custom, perhaps to restrain his convulsions or to concentrate the psychic force.

Both among the continental and Irish Celts those who sought hidden knowledge slept on graves, hoping to be inspired by the spirits of the dead.<sup>820</sup> Legend told how, the full version of the *Táin* having been lost, Murgan the *Filé* sang an incantation over the grave of Fergus mac Roig. A cloud hid him for three days, and during that time the dead man appeared and recited the saga to him.

In Ireland and the Highlands, divination by looking into the shoulder-blade of a sheep was used to discover future events or things happening at a distance, a survival from pagan times.<sup>821</sup> The scholiast on Lucan describes the Druidic method of chewing acorns and then prophesying, just as, in Ireland, eating nuts from the sacred hazels round Connla's well gave

inspiration.<sup>822</sup> The "priestesses" of Sena and the "Druidesses" of the third century had the gift of prophecy, and it was also ascribed freely to the *Filid*, the Druids, and to Christian saints. Druids are said to have prophesied the coming of S. Patrick, and similar prophecies are put in the mouths of Fionn and others, just as Montezuma's priests foretold the coming of the Spaniards.<sup>823</sup> The word used for such prophecies—*baile*, means "ecstasy," and it suggests that the prophet worked himself into a frenzy and then fell into a trance, in which he uttered his forecast. Prophecies were also made at the birth of a child, describing its future career.<sup>824</sup> Careful attention was given to the utterances of Druidic prophets, *e.g.* Medb's warriors postponed their expedition for fifteen days, because the Druids told them they would not succeed if they set out sooner.<sup>825</sup>

Mythical personages or divinities are said in the Irish texts to have stood on one leg, with one arm extended, and one eye closed, when uttering prophecies or incantations, and this was doubtless an attitude used by the seer.<sup>826</sup> A similar method is known elsewhere, and it may have been intended to produce greater force. From this attitude may have originated myths of beings with one arm, one leg, and one eye, like some Fomorians or the *Fachan* whose weird picture Campbell of Islay drew from verbal descriptions.<sup>827</sup>

Early Celtic saints occasionally describe lapses into heathenism in Ireland, not characterised by "idolatry," but by wizardry, dealing in charms, and *fidlanna*, perhaps a kind of divination with pieces of wood.<sup>828</sup> But it is much more likely that these had never really been abandoned. They belong to the primitive element of religion and magic which people cling to long after they have given up "idolatry."

<sup>738</sup>. Cæsar, vi. 16.

<sup>739</sup>. Rh<sup>ys</sup>, CB<sup>4</sup> 68.

<sup>740</sup>. Justin, xxvi. 2; Pomp. Mela, iii. 2.

<sup>741</sup>. Diod. Sic. xxii. 9.

<sup>742</sup>. See Jullian, 53.

- [743.](#) Servius on *Æneid*, iii. 57.
- [744.](#) Cæsar, vi. 16; Livy, xxxviii. 47; Diod. Sic. v. 32, xxxi. 13; Athenæus, iv. 51; Dio Cass., lxii. 7.
- [745.](#) Diod. Sic, xxxiv. 13; Strabo, iv. 4; Orosius, v. 16; Schol. on Lucan, Usener's ed. 32.
- [746.](#) Cæsar, vi. 16; Strabo, iv. 4; Diod. Sic. v. 32; Livy, xxxviii. 47.
- [747.](#) Mannhardt, *Baumkultus*, 529 f.
- [748.](#) Strabo, *ibid.* 4. 4.
- [749.](#) S. Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, vii. 19.
- [750.](#) Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 30; Strabo, iv. 4. 4.
- [751.](#) Suet. *Claud.* 25.
- [752.](#) Pomp. Mela, iii. 2. 18.
- [753.](#) Pliny, *HN* xxx. 4. 13.
- [754.](#) Dio. Cass. lxii. 6.
- [755.](#) O'Curry, *MC* ii. 222; Joyce, *SH* i. ch. 9.
- [756.](#) *RC* xvi. 35.
- [757.](#) *LL* 213b.
- [758.](#) See p. 52, *supra*.
- [759.](#) See, however, accounts of reckless child sacrifices in Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, i. 252, and Westermarck, *Moral Ideas*, i. 397.
- [760.](#) O'Curry, *MC* Intro, dcxli.
- [761.](#) *LU* 126a. A folk-version is given by Larminie, *West Irish Folk-Tales*, 139.
- [762.](#) *Book of Fermoy*, 89a.
- [763.](#) O'Curry, *MC* Intro. dcxl, ii. 222.
- [764.](#) Adamnan, *Vita S. Col.* Reeve's ed. 288.
- [765.](#) Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, ii. 317.
- [766.](#) Nennius, *Hist. Brit.* 40.
- [767.](#) Stokes, *TIG* xli.; O'Curry, *MC* ii. 9.
- [768.](#) Pliny, *HN* xxx. 1. The feeding of Ethni, daughter of Crimthann, on human flesh that she might sooner attain maturity may be an instance of "medicinal cannibalism" (*IT* iii. 363). The eating of parents among the Irish, described by Strabo (iv. 5), was an example of "honorific cannibalism." See my article "Cannibalism" in Hastings' *Encycl. of Rel. and Ethics*, iii, 194.
- [769.](#) Diod. Sic. vi. 12; Paus. x. 22. 3; Amm. Marc. xxvii. 4; Livy, xxiii. 24; Solin. xxii. 3.
- [770.](#) This custom continued in Ireland until Spenser's time.
- [771.](#) Leahy, i. 158; Giraldus, *Top. Hib.* iii. 22; Martin, 109.

- [772.](#) Sil. Ital. iv. 213; Diod. Sic. xiv. 115; Livy, x. 26; Strabo, iv. 4. 5; Miss Hull, 92.
- [773.](#) Diod. Sic. v. 29; Strabo, iv. 4. 5.
- [774.](#) D'Arbois, v. 11; Diod. Sic. v. 29; Strabo, *loc. cit.*
- [775.](#) *Annals of the Four Masters*, 864; *IT* i. 205.
- [776.](#) Sil. Ital. iv. 215, v. 652; Lucan, *Phar.* i. 447; Livy, xxiii. 24.
- [777.](#) See p. 71, *supra*; *CIL* xii. 1077. A dim memory of head-taking survived in the seventeenth century in Eigg, where headless skeletons were found, of which the islanders said that an enemy had cut off their heads (Martin, 277).
- [778.](#) Belloguet, *Ethnol. Gaul.* iii. 100.
- [779.](#) Sil. Ital. xiii. 482; Livy, xxiii. 24; Florus, i. 39.
- [780.](#) *ZCP* i. 106.
- [781.](#) Loth, i. 90 f., ii. 218-219. Sometimes the weapons of a great warrior had the same effect. The bows of Gwerthevyr were hidden in different parts of Prydein and preserved the land from Saxon invasion, until Gwrtheyrn, for love of a woman, dug them up (Loth, ii. 218-219).
- [782.](#) See p. 338, *infra*. In Ireland, the brain of an enemy was taken from the head, mixed with lime, and made into a ball. This was allowed to harden, and was then placed in the tribal armoury as a trophy.
- [783.](#) *L'Anthropologie*, xii. 206, 711. Cf. the English tradition of the "Holy Mawle," said to have been used for the same purpose. Thorns, *Anecdotes and Traditions*, 84.
- [784.](#) Arrian, *Cyneg.* xxxiii.
- [785.](#) Cæsar, vi. 17; Orosius, v. 16. 6.
- [786.](#) D'Arbois, i. 155.
- [787.](#) Curtin, *Tales of the Fairies*, 72; *Folk-Lore*, vii. 178-179.
- [788.](#) Mitchell, *Past in the Present*, 275.
- [789.](#) Mitchell, *op. cit.* 271 f.
- [790.](#) Cook, *Folk-Lore*, xvii. 332.
- [791.](#) Mitchell, *loc. cit.* 147. The corruption of "Maelrubha" to "Maree" may have been aided by confusing the name with *mo* or *mhor righ*.
- [792.](#) Mitchell, *loc. cit.*; Moore, 92, 145; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* i. 305; Worth, *Hist. of Devonshire*, 339; Dalryell, *passim*.
- [793.](#) Livy, xxiii. 24.
- [794.](#) Sébillot, ii. 166-167; *L'Anthrop.* xv. 729.
- [795.](#) Carmichael, *Carm. Gad.* i. 163.
- [796.](#) Martin, 28. A scribe called "Sonid," which might be the equivalent of "Shony," is mentioned in the Stowe missal (*Folk-Lore*, 1895).

- [797.](#) Campbell, *Superstitions*, 184 f; *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Trad.* ii. 455.
- [798.](#) Aelian, xvii. 19.
- [799.](#) Tacitus, *Ann.* xiv. 30; Dio Cass. lxii. 6.
- [800.](#) Appian, *Celtica*, 8; Livy, xxi. 28, xxxviii. 17, x. 26.
- [801.](#) Livy, v. 38, vii. 23; Polybius, ii. 29. Cf. Watteville, *Le cri de guerre chez les différents peuples*, Paris, 1889.
- [802.](#) Livy, v. 38.
- [803.](#) Appian, vi. 53; Muret et Chabouillet, *Catalogue des monnaies gauloises*, 6033 f., 6941 f.
- [804.](#) Diod. v. 31; Justin, xxvi. 2, 4; Cicero, *de Div.* ii. 36, 76; Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 30; Strabo, iii. 3. 6.
- [805.](#) Dio Cass. lxii. 6.
- [806.](#) Reinach, *Catal. Sommaire*, 31; Pseudo-Plutarch, *de Fluviis*, vi. 4; *Mirab. Auscult.* 86.
- [807.](#) Strabo, iv. 4. 6.
- [808.](#) Justin, xxiv, 4; Cicero, *de Div.* i. 15. 26. (Cf. the two magic crows which announced the coming of Cúchulainn to the other world (D'Arbois, v. 203); Irish *Nennius*, 145; O'Curry, *MC* ii. 224; cf. for a Welsh instance, Skene, i. 433.)
- [809.](#) Joyce, *SH* i. 229; O'Curry, *MC* ii. 224, *MS Mat.* 284.
- [810.](#) *IT* i. 129; Livy, v. 34; Loth, *RC* xvi. 314. The Irish for consulting a lot is *crann-chur*, "the act of casting wood."
- [811.](#) Cæsar, vi. 14.
- [812.](#) O'Curry, *MC* ii. 46, 224; Stokes, *Three Irish Homilies*, 103.
- [813.](#) Cormac, 94. Fionn's divination by chewing his thumb is called *Imbas Forosnai* (*RC* xxv. 347).
- [814.](#) *Antient Laws of Ireland*, i. 45.
- [815.](#) Hyde, *Lit. Hist. of Ireland*, 241.
- [816.](#) Justin, xliii. 5.
- [817.](#) O'Grady, ii. 362; Giraldus, *Descr. Camb.* i. 11.
- [818.](#) Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, i. 311; Martin, 111.
- [819.](#) Richardson, *Folly of Pilgrimages*, 70.
- [820.](#) Tertullian, *de Anima*, 57; *Coll. de Reb. Hib.* iii. 334.
- [821.](#) Campbell, *Superstitions*, 263; Curtin, *Tales*, 84.
- [822.](#) Lucan, ed. Usener, 33.
- [823.](#) See examples in O'Curry, *MS Mat.* 383 f.
- [824.](#) Miss Hull, 19, 20, 23.
- [825.](#) *LU* 55.

[826.](#) *RC* xii. 98, xxi. 156, xxii. 61.

[827.](#) *RC* xv. 432; *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.M. 2530; Campbell, *WHT* iv. 298.

[828.](#) See "Adamnan's Second Vision." *RC* xii. 441.

# Tabu

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The Irish *geis*, pl. *geasa*, which may be rendered by Tabu, had two senses. It meant something which must not be done for fear of disastrous consequences, and also an obligation to do something commanded by another.

As a tabu the *geis* had a large place in Irish life, and was probably known to other branches of the Celts.<sup>[829](#)</sup> It followed the general course of tabu wherever found. Sometimes it was imposed before birth, or it was hereditary, or connected with totemism. Legends, however, often arose giving a different explanation to *geasa*, long after the customs in which they originated had been forgotten. It was one of Diarmaid's *geasa* not to hunt the boar of Ben Gulban, and this was probably totemic in origin. But legend told how his father killed a child, the corpse being changed into a boar by the child's father, who said its span of life would be the same as Diarmaid's, and that he would be slain by it. Oengus put *geasa* on Diarmaid not to hunt it, but at Fionn's desire he broke these, and was killed.<sup>[830](#)</sup> Other *geasa*—those of Cúchulainn not to eat dog's flesh, and of Conaire never to chase birds—also point to totemism.

In some cases *geasa* were based on ideas of right and wrong, honour or dishonour, or were intended to cause avoidance of unlucky days. Others are unintelligible to us. The largest number of *geasa* concerned kings and chiefs, and are described, along with their corresponding privileges, in the *Book of Rights*. Some of the *geasa* of the king of Connaught were not to go to an assembly of women at Leaghair, not to sit in autumn on the sepulchral mound of the wife of Maine, not to go in a grey-speckled garment on a grey-speckled horse to the heath of Cruachan, and the like.<sup>[831](#)</sup> The meaning of these is obscure, but other examples are more obvious and show that all alike corresponded to the tabus applying to kings in primitive societies, who are often magicians, priests, or even divine representatives. On them the welfare of the tribe and the making of rain or sunshine, and the processes of



growth depend. They must therefore be careful of their actions, and hence they are hedged about with tabus which, however unmeaning, have a direct connection with their powers. Out of such conceptions the Irish kingly *geasa* arose. Their observance made the earth fruitful, produced abundance and prosperity, and kept both the king and his land from misfortune. In later times these were supposed to be dependent on the "goodness" or the reverse of the king, but this was a departure from the older idea, which is clearly stated in the *Book of Rights*.<sup>832</sup> The kings were divinities on whom depended fruitfulness and plenty, and who must therefore submit to obey their *geasa*. Some of their prerogatives seem also to be connected with this state of things. Thus they might eat of certain foods or go to certain places on particular days.<sup>833</sup> In primitive societies kings and priests often prohibit ordinary mortals from eating things which they desire for themselves by making them *tabu*, and in other cases the fruits of the earth can only be eaten after king or priest has partaken of them ceremonially. This may have been the case in Ireland. The privilege relating to places may have meant that these were sacred and only to be entered by the king at certain times and in his sacred capacity.

As a reflection from this state of things, the heroes of the sagas, Cúchulainn and Fionn, had numerous *geasa* applicable to themselves, some of them religious, some magical, others based on primitive ideas of honour, others perhaps the invention of the narrators.<sup>834</sup>

*Geasa*, whether in the sense of tabus or of obligations, could be imposed by any one, and must be obeyed, for disobedience produced disastrous effects. Probably the obligation was framed as an incantation or spell, and the power of the spell being fully believed in, obedience would follow as a matter of course.<sup>835</sup> Examples of such *geasa* are numerous in Irish literature. Cúchulainn's father-in-law put *geasa* on him that he should know no rest until he found out the cause of the exile of the sons of Doel. And Grainne put *geasa* on Diarmaid that he should elope with her, and this he did, though the act was repugnant to him.

Among savages the punishment which is supposed to follow tabu-breaking is often produced through auto-suggestion when a tabu has been

unconsciously infringed and this has afterwards been discovered. Fear produces the result which is feared. The result is believed, however, to be the working of divine vengeance. In the case of Irish *geasa*, destruction and death usually followed their infringement, as in the case of Diarmaid and Cúchulainn. But the best instance is found in the tale of *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*, in which the *síd*-folk avenge themselves for Eochaid's action by causing the destruction of his descendant Conaire, who is forced to break his *geasa*. These are first minutely detailed; then it is shown how, almost in spite of himself, Conaire was led on to break them, and how, in the sequel, his tragic death occurred.<sup>836</sup> Viewed in this light as the working of divine vengeance to a remote descendant of the offender by forcing him to break his tabus, the story is one of the most terrible in the whole range of Irish literature.

<sup>829</sup>. The religious interdictions mentioned by Cæsar (vi. 13) may be regarded as tabus, while the spoils of war placed in a consecrated place (vi. 18), and certain animals among the Britons (v. 12), were clearly under tabu.

<sup>830</sup>. Joyce, *OCR* 332 f.

<sup>831</sup>. *Book of Rights*, ed. O'Donovan, 5.

<sup>832</sup>. *Book of Rights*, 7.

<sup>833</sup>. *Ibid.* 3 f.

<sup>834</sup>. *LL* 107; O'Grady, ii. 175.

<sup>835</sup>. In Highland tales *geasa* is translated "spells."

<sup>836</sup>. *RC* xxii. 27 f. The story of *Da Choca's Hostel* has for its subject the destruction of Cormac through breaking his *geasa* (*RC* xxi. 149 f.).

# Festivals

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The Celtic year was not at first regulated by the solstices and equinoxes, but by some method connected with agriculture or with the seasons. Later, the year was a lunar one, and there is some evidence of attempts at synchronising solar and lunar time. But time was mainly measured by the moon, while in all calculations night preceded day.<sup>[837](#)</sup> Thus *oidhche Samhain* was the night preceding Samhain (November 1st), not the following night. The usage survives in our "sennight" and "fortnight." In early times the year had two, possibly three divisions, marking periods in pastoral or agricultural life, but it was afterwards divided into four periods, while the year began with the winter division, opening at Samhain. A twofold, subdivided into a fourfold division is found in Irish texts,<sup>[838](#)</sup> and may be tabulated as follows:—

A. Geimredh (winter half)	1st quarter, <i>Geimredh</i> , beginning with the festival of <i>Samhain</i> , November 1st.
2nd quarter, <i>Earrach</i> , beginning February 1st (sometimes called <i>Oimelc</i> ).	
B. Samradh (summer half)	3rd quarter, <i>Samradh</i> , beginning with the festival of <i>Beltane</i> , May 1st (called also <i>Cét-soman</i> or <i>Cét-samain</i> , 1st day of <i>Samono-s</i> ; cf. Welsh <i>Cyntefyn</i> ).
4th quarter, <i>Foghamar</i> , beginning with the festival of <i>Lugnasadh</i> , August 1st (sometimes called <i>Brontroghain</i> ).	

These divisions began with festivals, and clear traces of three of them occur over the whole Celtic area, but the fourth has now been merged in S. Brigit's day. Beltane and Samhain marked the beginning of the two great divisions, and were perhaps at first movable festivals, according as the signs of summer or winter appeared earlier or later. With the adoption of the Roman calendar some of the festivals were displaced, *e.g.* in Gaul, where the Calends of January took the place of Samhain, the ritual being also transferred.

None of the four festivals is connected with the times of equinox and solstice. This points to the fact that originally the Celtic year was independent of these. But Midsummer day was also observed not only by the Celts, but by most European folk, the ritual resembling that of Beltane. It has been held, and an old tradition in Ireland gives some support to the theory, that under Christian influences the old pagan feast of Beltane was merged in that of S. John Baptist on Midsummer day.<sup>839</sup> But, though there are Christian elements in the Midsummer ritual, denoting a desire to bring it under Church influence, the pagan elements in folk-custom are strongly marked, and the festival is deeply rooted in an earlier paganism all over Europe. Without much acquaintance with astronomy, men must have noted the period of the sun's longest course from early times, and it would probably be observed ritually. The festivals of Beltane and Midsummer may have arisen independently, and entered into competition with each other. Or Beltane may have been an early pastoral festival marking the beginning of summer when the herds went out to pasture, and Midsummer a more purely agricultural festival. And since their ritual aspect and purpose as seen in folk-custom are similar, they may eventually have borrowed each from the other. Or they may be later separate fixed dates of an earlier movable summer festival. For our purpose we may here consider them as twin halves of such a festival. Where Midsummer was already observed, the influence of the Roman calendar would confirm that observance. The festivals of the Christian year also affected the older observances. Some of the ritual was transferred to saints' days within the range of the pagan festival days, thus the Samhain ritual is found observed on S. Martin's day. In other cases, holy

days took the place of the old festivals—All Saints' and All Souls' that of Samhain, S. Brigit's day that of February 1st, S. John Baptist's day that of Midsummer, Lammas that of Lughnasad, and some attempt was made to hallow, if not to oust, the older ritual.

The Celtic festivals being primarily connected with agricultural and pastoral life, we find in their ritual survivals traces not only of a religious but of a magical view of things, of acts designed to assist the powers of life and growth. The proof of this will be found in a detailed examination of the surviving customs connected with them.

## **SAMHAIN.**

Samhain,<sup>[840](#)</sup> beginning the Celtic year, was an important social and religious occasion. The powers of blight were beginning their ascendancy, yet the future triumph of the powers of growth was not forgotten. Probably Samhain had gathered up into itself other feasts occurring earlier or later. Thus it bears traces of being a harvest festival, the ritual of the earlier harvest feast being transferred to the winter feast, as the Celts found themselves in lands where harvest is not gathered before late autumn. The harvest rites may, however, have been associated with threshing rather than ingathering. Samhain also contains in its ritual some of the old pastoral cults, while as a New Year feast its ritual is in great part that of all festivals of beginnings.

New fire was brought into each house at Samhain from the sacred bonfire,<sup>[841](#)</sup> itself probably kindled from the need-fire by the friction of pieces of wood. This preserved its purity, the purity necessary to a festival of beginnings.<sup>[842](#)</sup> The putting away of the old fires was probably connected with various rites for the expulsion of evils, which usually occur among many peoples at the New Year festival. By that process of dislocation which scattered the Samhain ritual over a wider period and gave some of it to Christmas, the kindling of the Yule log may have been originally connected with this festival.

Divination and forecasting the fate of the inquirer for the coming year also took place. Sometimes these were connected with the bonfire, stones placed in it showing by their appearance the fortune or misfortune awaiting their owners.<sup>843</sup> Others, like those described by Burns in his "Hallowe'en," were unconnected with the bonfire and were of an erotic nature.<sup>844</sup>

The slaughter of animals for winter consumption which took place at Samhain, or, as now, at Martinmas, though connected with economic reasons, had a distinctly religious aspect, as it had among the Teutons. In recent times in Ireland one of the animals was offered to S. Martin, who may have taken the place of a god, and ill-luck followed the non-observance of the custom.<sup>845</sup> The slaughter was followed by general feasting. This later slaughter may be traced back to the pastoral stage, in which the animals were regarded as divine, and one was slain annually and eaten sacramentally. Or, if the slaughter was more general, the animals would be propitiated. But when the animals ceased to be worshipped, the slaughter would certainly be more general, though still preserving traces of its original character. The pastoral sacrament may also have been connected with the slaying and eating of an animal representing the corn-spirit at harvest time. In one legend S. Martin is associated with the animal slain at Martinmas, and is said to have been cut up and eaten in the form of an ox,<sup>846</sup> as if a former divine animal had become an anthropomorphic divinity, the latter being merged in the personality of a Christian saint.

Other rites, connected with the Calends of January as a result of dislocation, point also in this direction. In Gaul and Germany riotous processions took place with men dressed in the heads and skins of animals.<sup>847</sup> This rite is said by Tille to have been introduced from Italy, but it is more likely to have been a native custom.<sup>848</sup> As the people ate the flesh of the slain animals sacramentally, so they clothed themselves in the skins to promote further contact with their divinity. Perambulating the township sunwise dressed in the skin of a cow took place until recently in the Hebrides at New Year, in order to keep off misfortune, a piece of the hide being burned and the smoke inhaled by each person and animal in the

township.<sup>[849](#)</sup> Similar customs have been found in other Celtic districts, and these animal disguises can hardly be separated from the sacramental slaughter at Samhain.<sup>[850](#)</sup>

Evils having been or being about to be cast off in the New Year ritual, a few more added to the number can make little difference. Hence among primitive peoples New Year is often characterised by orgiastic rites. These took place at the Calends in Gaul, and were denounced by councils and preachers.<sup>[851](#)</sup> In Ireland the merriment at Samhain is often mentioned in the texts,<sup>[852](#)</sup> and similar orgiastic rites lurk behind the Hallowe'en customs in Scotland and in the licence still permitted to youths in the quietest townships of the West Highlands at Samhain eve.

Samhain, as has been seen, was also a festival of the dead, whose ghosts were fed at this time.<sup>[853](#)</sup>

As the powers of growth were in danger and in eclipse in winter, men thought it necessary to assist them. As a magical aid the Samhain bonfire was chief, and it is still lit in the Highlands. Brands were carried round, and from it the new fire was lit in each house. In North Wales people jumped through the fire, and when it was extinct, rushed away to escape the "black sow" who would take the hindmost.<sup>[854](#)</sup> The bonfire represented the sun, and was intended to strengthen it. But representing the sun, it had all the sun's force, hence those who jumped through it were strengthened and purified. The Welsh reference to the hindmost and to the black sow may point to a former human sacrifice, perhaps of any one who stumbled in jumping through the fire. Keating speaks of a Druidic sacrifice in the bonfire, whether of man or beast is not specified.<sup>[855](#)</sup> Probably the victim, like the scapegoat, was laden with the accumulated evils of the year, as in similar New Year customs elsewhere. Later belief regarded the sacrifice, if sacrifice there was, as offered to the powers of evil—the black sow, unless this animal is a reminiscence of the corn-spirit in its harmful aspect. Earlier powers, whether of growth or of blight, came to be associated with Samhain as demoniac beings—the "malignant bird flocks" which blighted crops and killed animals, the *samhanach* which steals children, and Mongfind the



banshee, to whom "women and the rabble" make petitions on Samhain eve.<sup>856</sup> Witches, evil-intentioned fairies, and the dead were particularly active then.

Though the sacrificial victim had come to be regarded as an offering to the powers of blight, he may once have represented a divinity of growth or, in earlier times, the corn-spirit. Such a victim was slain at harvest, and harvest is often late in northern Celtic regions, while the slaying was sometimes connected not with the harvest field, but with the later threshing. This would bring it near the Samhain festival. The slaying of the corn-spirit was derived from the earlier slaying of a tree or vegetation-spirit embodied in a tree and also in a human or animal victim. The corn-spirit was embodied in the last sheaf cut as well as in an animal or human being.<sup>857</sup> This human victim may have been regarded as a king, since in late popular custom a mock king is chosen at winter festivals.<sup>858</sup> In other cases the effigy of a saint is hung up and carried round the different houses, part of the dress being left at each. The saint has probably succeeded to the traditional ritual of the divine victim.<sup>859</sup> The primitive period in which the corn-spirit was regarded as female, with a woman as her human representative, is also recalled in folk-custom. The last sheaf is called the Maiden or the Mother, while, as in Northamptonshire, girls choose a queen on S. Catharine's day, November 26th, and in some Christmas pageants "Yule's wife," as well as Yule, is present, corresponding to the May queen of the summer festival.<sup>860</sup> Men also masqueraded as women at the Calends. The dates of these survivals may be explained by that dislocation of the Samhain festival already pointed out. This view of the Samhain human sacrifices is supported by the Irish offerings to the Fomorians—gods of growth, later regarded as gods of blight, and to Cromm Cruaich, in both cases at Samhain.<sup>861</sup> With the evolution of religious thought, the slain victim came to be regarded as an offering to evil powers.

This aspect of Samhain, as a festival to promote and assist festivity, is further seen in the belief in the increased activity of fairies at that time. In Ireland, fairies are connected with the Tuatha Dé Danann, the divinities of growth, and in many folk-tales they are associated with agricultural



processes. The use of evergreens at Christmas is perhaps also connected with the carrying of them round the fields in older times, as an evidence that the life of nature was not extinct.<sup>[862](#)</sup>

Samhain may thus be regarded as, in origin, an old pastoral and agricultural festival, which in time came to be looked upon as affording assistance to the powers of growth in their conflict with the powers of blight. Perhaps some myth describing this combat may lurk behind the story of the battle of Mag-tured fought on Samhain between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomorians. While the powers of blight are triumphant in winter, the Tuatha Déa are represented as the victors, though they suffer loss and death. Perhaps this enshrines the belief in the continual triumph of life and growth over blight and decay, or it may arise from the fact that Samhain was both a time of rejoicing for the ingathered harvest, and of wailing for the coming supremacy of winter and the reign of the powers of blight.

## **BELTANE.**

In Cormac's *Glossary* and other texts, "Beltane" is derived from *bel-tene*, "a goodly fire," or from *bel-dine*, because newly-born (*dine*) cattle were offered to Bel, an idol-god.<sup>[863](#)</sup> The latter is followed by those who believe in a Celtic Belus, connected with Baal. No such god is known, however, and the god Belenos is in no way connected with the Semitic divinity. M. D'Arbois assumes an unknown god of death, Beltene (from *beltu*, "to die"), whose festival Beltane was.<sup>[864](#)</sup> But Beltane was a festival of life, of the sun shining in his strength. Dr. Stokes gives a more acceptable explanation of the word. Its primitive form was *belo-tepniâ*, from *belo-s*, "clear," "shining," the root of the names Belenos and Belisama, and *tepnos*, "fire." Thus the word would mean something like "bright fire," perhaps the sun or the bonfire, or both.<sup>[865](#)</sup>

The folk-survivals of the Beltane and Midsummer festivals show that both were intended to promote fertility.

One of the chief ritual acts at Beltane was the kindling of bonfires, often on hills. The house-fires in the district were often extinguished, the bonfire being lit by friction from a rotating wheel—the German "need-fire."<sup>866</sup> The fire kept off disease and evil, hence cattle were driven through it, or, according to Cormac, between two fires lit by Druids, in order to keep them in health during the year.<sup>867</sup> Sometimes the fire was lit beneath a sacred tree, or a pole covered with greenery was surrounded by the fuel, or a tree was burned in the fire.<sup>868</sup> These trees survive in the Maypole of later custom, and they represented the vegetation-spirit, to whom also the worshippers assimilated themselves by dressing in leaves. They danced sunwise round the fire or ran through the fields with blazing branches or wisps of straw, imitating the course of the sun, and thus benefiting the fields.<sup>869</sup> For the same reason the tree itself was probably borne through the fields. Houses were decked with boughs and thus protected by the spirit of vegetation.<sup>870</sup>

An animal representing the spirit of vegetation may have been slain. In late survivals of Beltane at Dublin, a horse's skull and bones were thrown into the fire,<sup>871</sup> the attenuated form of an earlier sacrifice or slaying of a divine victim, by whom strength was transferred to all the animals which passed through the fire. In some cases a human victim may have been slain. This is suggested by customs surviving in Perthshire in the eighteenth century, when a cake was broken up and distributed, and the person who received a certain blackened portion was called the "Beltane carline" or "devoted." A pretence was made of throwing him into the fire, or he had to leap three times through it, and during the festival he was spoken of as "dead."<sup>872</sup> Martin says that malefactors were burned in the fire,<sup>873</sup> and though he cites no authority, this agrees with the Celtic use of criminals as victims. Perhaps the victim was at one time a human representative of the vegetation-spirit.

Beltane cakes or bannocks, perhaps made of the grain of the sacred last sheaf from the previous harvest, and therefore sacramental in character, were also used in different ways in folk-survivals. They were rolled down a

slope—a magical imitative act, symbolising and aiding the course of the sun. The cake had also a divinatory character. If it broke on reaching the foot of the slope this indicated the approaching death of its owner. In another custom in Perthshire, part of a cake was thrown over the shoulder with the words, "This I give to thee, preserve thou my horses; this to thee, preserve thou my sheep; this to thee, O fox, preserve thou my lambs; this to thee, O hooded crow; this to thee, O eagle." Here there is an appeal to beneficial and noxious powers, whether this was the original intention of the rite.<sup>874</sup> But if the cakes were made of the last sheaf, they were probably at one time eaten sacramentally, their sacrificial use emerging later.

The bonfire was a sun-charm, representing and assisting the sun. Rain-charms were also used at Beltane. Sacred wells were visited and the ceremony performed with their waters, these perhaps being sprinkled over the tree or the fields to promote a copious rainfall for the benefit of vegetation. The use of such rites at Beltane and at other festivals may have given rise to the belief that wells were especially efficacious then for purposes of healing. The custom of rolling in the grass to benefit by May dew was probably connected with magical rites in which moisture played an important part.<sup>875</sup>

The idea that the powers of growth had successfully combated those of blight may have been ritually represented. This is suggested by the mimic combats of Summer and Winter at this time, to which reference has already been made. Again, the May king and queen represent earlier personages who were regarded as embodying the spirits of vegetation and fertility at this festival, and whose marriage or union magically assisted growth and fertility, as in numerous examples of this ritual marriage elsewhere.<sup>876</sup> It may be assumed that a considerable amount of sexual licence also took place with the same magical purpose. Sacred marriage and festival orgy were an appeal to the forces of nature to complete their beneficial work, as well as a magical aid to them in that work. Analogy leads to the supposition that the king of the May was originally a priest-king, the incarnation of the spirit of vegetation. He or his surrogate was slain, while his bodily force was unabated, in order that it might be passed on undiminished to his

successor. But the persistent place given to the May queen rather than to the king suggests the earlier prominence of women and of female spirits of fertility or of a great Mother-goddess in such rites. It is also significant that in the Perthshire ritual the man chosen was still called the *Beltane carlane* or *cailleach* ("old woman"). And if, as Professor Pearson maintains, witch orgies are survivals of old sex-festivals, then the popular belief in the activity of witches on Beltane eve, also shows that the festival had once been mainly one in which women took part. Such orgies often took place on hills which had been the sites of a cult in former times.<sup>[877](#)</sup>

## MIDSUMMER.

The ritual of the Midsummer festival did not materially differ from that of Beltane, and as folk-survivals show, it was practised not only by the Celts, but by many other European peoples. It was, in fact, a primitive nature festival such as would readily be observed by all under similar psychic conditions and in like surroundings. A bonfire was again the central rite of this festival, the communal nature of which is seen in the fact that all must contribute materials to it. In local survivals, mayor and priest, representing the earlier local chief and priest, were present, while a service in church preceded the procession to the scene of the bonfire. Dancing sunwise round the fire to the accompaniment of songs which probably took the place of hymns or tunes in honour of the Sun-god, commonly occurred, and by imitating the sun's action, may have been intended to make it more powerful. The livelier the dance the better would be the harvest.<sup>[878](#)</sup> As the fire represented the sun, it possessed the purifying and invigorating powers of the sun; hence leaping through the fire preserved from disease, brought prosperity, or removed barrenness. Hence also cattle were driven through the fire. But if any one stumbled as he leaped, ill-luck was supposed to follow him. He was devoted to the *fadets* or spirits,<sup>[879](#)</sup> and perhaps, like the "devoted" Beltane victim, he may formerly have been sacrificed. Animal sacrifices are certainly found in many survivals, the victims being often

placed in osier baskets and thrown into the fire. In other districts great human effigies of osier were carried in procession and burned.<sup>[880](#)</sup>

The connection of such sacrifices with the periodical slaying of a representative of the vegetation-spirit has been maintained by Mannhardt and Dr. Frazer.<sup>[881](#)</sup> As has been seen, periodic sacrifices for the fertility of the land are mentioned by Cæsar, Strabo, and Diodorus, human victims and animals being enclosed in an osier image and burned.<sup>[882](#)</sup> These images survive in the osier effigies just referred to, while they may also be connected with the custom of decking the human representatives of the spirit of vegetation in greenery. The holocausts may be regarded as extensions of the earlier custom of slaying one victim, the incarnation of a vegetation-spirit. This slaying was gradually regarded as sacrificial, but as the beneficial effect of the sacrifice on growth was still believed in, it would naturally be thought that still better effects would be produced if many victims were offered. The victims were burned in a fire representing the sun, and vegetation was thus doubly benefited, by the victims and by the sun-god.

The oldest conception of the vegetation-spirit was that of a tree-spirit which had power over rain, sunshine, and every species of fruitfulness. For this reason a tree had a prominent place both in the Beltane and Midsummer feasts. It was carried in procession, imparting its benefits to each house or field. Branches of it were attached to each house for the same purpose. It was then burned, or it was set up to procure benefits to vegetation during the year and burned at the next Midsummer festival.<sup>[883](#)</sup> The sacred tree was probably an oak, and, as has been seen, the mistletoe rite probably took place on Midsummer eve, as a preliminary to cutting down the sacred tree and in order to secure the life or soul of the tree, which must first be secured before the tree could be cut down. The life of the tree was in the mistletoe, still alive in winter when the tree itself seemed to be dead. Such beliefs as this concerning the detachable soul or life survive in *Märchen*, and are still alive among savages.<sup>[884](#)</sup>

Folk-survivals show that a human or an animal representative of the vegetation-spirit, brought into connection with the tree, was also slain or

burned along with the tree.<sup>[885](#)</sup> Thus the cutting of the mistletoe would be regarded as a preliminary to the slaying of the human victim, who, like the tree, was the representative of the spirit of vegetation.

The bonfire representing the sun, and the victims, like the tree, representing the spirit of vegetation, it is obvious why the fire had healing and fertilising powers, and why its ashes and the ashes or the flesh of the victims possessed the same powers. Brands from the fire were carried through the fields or villages, as the tree had been, or placed on the fields or in houses, where they were carefully preserved for a year. All this aided growth and prosperity, just as the smoke of the fire, drifting over the fields, produced fertility. Ashes from the fire, and probably the calcined bones or even the flesh of the victims, were scattered on the fields or preserved and mixed with the seed corn. Again, part of the flesh may have been eaten sacramentally, since, as has been seen, Pliny refers to the belief of the Celts in the eating of human flesh as most wholesome.

In the Stone Age, as with many savages, a circle typified the sun, and as soon as the wheel was invented its rolling motion at once suggested that of the sun. In the *Edda* the sun is "the beautiful, the shining wheel," and similar expressions occur in the *Vedas*. Among the Celts the wheel of the sun was a favourite piece of symbolism, and this is seen in various customs at the Midsummer festival. A burning wheel was rolled down a slope or trundled through the fields, or burning brands were whirled round so as to give the impression of a fiery wheel. The intention was primarily to imitate the course of the sun through the heavens, and so, on the principle of imitative magic, to strengthen it. But also, as the wheel was rolled through the fields, so it was hoped that the direct beneficial action of the sun upon them would follow. Similar rites might be performed not only at Midsummer, but at other times, to procure blessing or to ward off evil, e.g. carrying fire round houses or fields or cattle or round a child *deiseil* or sunwise,<sup>[886](#)</sup> and, by a further extension of thought, the blazing wheel, or the remains of the burning brands thrown to the winds, had also the effect of carrying off accumulated evils.<sup>[887](#)</sup>



Beltane and Midsummer thus appear as twin halves of a spring or early summer festival, the intention of which was to promote fertility and health. This was done by slaying the spirit of vegetation in his representative—tree, animal, or man. His death quickened the energies of earth and man. The fire also magically assisted the course of the sun. Survival of the ancient rites are or were recently found in all Celtic regions, and have been constantly combated by the Church. But though they were continued, their true meaning was forgotten, and they were mainly performed for luck or out of sheer conservatism. Sometimes a Christian aspect was given to them, *e.g.* by connecting the fires with S. John, or by associating the rites with the service of the Church, or by the clergy being present at them. But their true nature was still evident as acts of pagan worship and magic which no veneer of Christianity could ever quite conceal.<sup>[888](#)</sup>

## LUGNASAD.

The 1st of August, coming midway between Beltane and Samhain, was an important festival among the Celts. In Christian times the day became Lammass, but its name still survives in Irish as Lughnasad, in Gaelic as Lunasdal or Lunasduinn, and in Manx as Laa Luanys, and it is still observed as a fair or feast in many districts. Formerly assemblies at convenient centres were held on this day, not only for religious purposes, but for commerce and pleasure, both of these being of course saturated with religion. "All Ireland" met at Tailtiu, just as "all Gaul" met at Lugudunum, "Lug's town," or Lyons, in honour of Augustus, though the feast there had formerly been in honour of the god Lugus.<sup>[889](#)</sup> The festival was here Romanised, as it was also in Britain, where its name appears as *Goel-aoust*, *Gul-austus*, and *Gwyl Awst*, now the "August feast," but formerly the "feast of Augustus," the name having replaced one corresponding to Lughnasad.<sup>[890](#)</sup>

Cormac explains the name Lughnasad as a festival of Lugh mac Ethlenn, celebrated by him in the beginning of autumn, and the *Rennes Dindsenchas* accounts for its origin by saying that Lug's foster-mother, Tailtiu, having died on the Calends of August, he directed an assembly for lamentation to

be held annually on that day at her tomb.<sup>891</sup> Lug is thus the founder of his own festival, for that it was his, and not Tailtiu's, is clear from the fact that his name is attached to it. As Lammas was a Christian harvest thanksgiving, so also was Lughnasad a pagan harvest feast, part of the ritual of which passed over to Samhain. The people made glad before the sun-god—Lug perhaps having that character—who had assisted them in the growth of the things on which their lives depended. Marriages were also arranged at this feast, probably because men had now more leisure and more means for entering upon matrimony. Possibly promiscuous love-making also occurred as a result of the festival gladness, agricultural districts being still notoriously immoral. Some evidence points to the connection of the feast with Lug's marriage, though this has been allegorised into his wedding the "sovereignty of Erin." Perhaps we have here a hint of the rite of the sacred marriage, for the purpose of magically fertilising the fields against next year's sowing.

Due observance of the feast produced abundance of corn, fruit, milk, and fish. Probably the ritual observed included the preservation of the last sheaf as representing the corn-spirit, giving some of it to the cattle to strengthen them, and mingling it with next year's corn to impart to it the power of the corn-spirit. It may also have included the slaying of an animal or human incarnation of the corn-spirit, whose flesh and blood quickened the soil and so produced abundance next year, or, when partaken of by the worshippers, brought blessings to them. To neglect such rites, abundant instances of which exist in folk-custom, would be held to result in scarcity. This would also explain, as already suggested, why the festival was associated with the death of Tailtiu or of Carman. The euhemerised queen-goddess Tailtiu and the woman Carman had once been corn-goddesses, evolved from more primitive corn-spirits, and slain at the feast in their female representatives. The story of their death and burial at the festival was a dim memory of this ancient rite, and since the festival was also connected with the sun-god Lug, it was easy to bring him into relationship with the earlier goddess. Elsewhere the festival, in its memorial aspect, was



associated with a king, probably because male victims had come to be representatives of a corn-god who had taken the place of the goddess.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some of the ritual of these festivals is illustrated by scattered notices in classical writers, and on the whole they support our theory that the festivals originated in a female cult of spirits or goddesses of fertility. Strabo speaks of sacrifices offered to Demeter and Kore, according to the ritual followed at Samothrace, in an island near Britain, *i.e.* to native goddesses equated with them. He also describes the ritual of the Namnite women on an island in the Loire. They are called Bacchantes because they conciliated Bacchus with mysteries and sacrifices; in other words, they observed an orgiastic cult of a god equated with Bacchus. No man must set foot on the island, but the women left it once a year for intercourse with the other sex. Once a year the temple of the god was unroofed, and roofed again before sunset. If any woman dropped her load of materials (and it was said this always happened), she was torn in pieces and her limbs carried round the temple.<sup>[892](#)</sup> Dionysius Periegetes says the women were crowned with ivy, and celebrated their mysteries by night in honour of Earth and Proserpine with great clamour.<sup>[893](#)</sup> Pliny also makes a reference to British rites in which nude women and girls took part, their bodies stained with woad.<sup>[894](#)</sup>

At a later time, S. Gregory of Tours speaks of the image of a goddess Berecynthia drawn on a litter through the streets, fields, and vineyards of Augustodunum on the days of her festival, or when the fields were threatened with scarcity. The people danced and sang before it. The image was covered with a white veil.<sup>[895](#)</sup> Berecynthia has been conjectured by Professor Anwyl to be the goddess Brigindu, worshipped at Valnay.<sup>[896](#)</sup>

These rites were all directed towards divinities of fertility. But in harvest customs in Celtic Scotland and elsewhere two sheaves of corn were called respectively the Old Woman and the Maiden, the corn-spirit of the past year and that of the year to come, and corresponding to Demeter and Kore in early Greek agricultural ritual. As in Greece, so among the Celts,

the primitive corn-spirits had probably become more individualised goddesses with an elaborate cult, observed on an island or at other sacred spots. The cult probably varied here and there, and that of a god of fertility may have taken the place of the cult of goddesses. A god was worshipped by the Namnite women, according to Strabo, goddesses according to Dionysius. The mangled victim was probably regarded as representative of a divinity, and perhaps part of the flesh was mixed with the seed-corn, like the grain of the Maiden sheaf, or buried in the earth. This rite is common among savages, and its presence in old European ritual is attested by survivals. That these rites were tabu to men probably points to the fact that they were examples of an older general custom, in which all such rites were in the hands of women who cultivated the earth, and who were the natural priestesses of goddesses of growth and fertility, of vegetation and the growing corn. Another example is found in the legend and procession of Godiva at Coventry—the survival of a pagan cult from which men were excluded.<sup>[897](#)</sup>

Pliny speaks of the nudity of the women engaged in the cult. Nudity is an essential part of all primitive agricultural rites, and painting the body is also a widespread ritual act. Dressing with leaves or green stuff, as among the Namnite women, and often with the intention of personating the spirit of vegetation, is also customary. By unveiling the body, and especially the sexual organs, women more effectually represented the goddess of fertility, and more effectually as her representatives, or through their own powers, magically conveyed fertility to the fields. Nakedness thus became a powerful magico-religious symbol, and it is found as part of the ritual for producing rain.<sup>[898](#)</sup>

There is thus abundant evidence of the cult of fertility, vegetation, and corn-spirits, who tended to become divinities, male or female. Here and there, through conservatism, the cult remained in the hands of women, but more generally it had become a ritual in which both men and women took part—that of the great agricultural festivals. Where a divinity had taken the place of the vaguer spirits, her image, like that of Berecynthia, was used in the ritual, but the image was probably the successor of the tree which

embodied the vegetation-spirit, and was carried through the fields to fertilise them. Similar processions of images, often accompanied by a ritual washing of the image in order to invigorate the divinity, or, as in the similar May-day custom, to produce rain, are found in the Teutonic cult of Nerthus, the Phrygian of Cybele, the Hindu of Bhavani, and the Roman ritual of the Bona Dea. The image of Berecynthia was thus probably washed also. Washing the images of saints, usually to produce rain, has sometimes taken the place of the washing of a divine image, and similarly the relics of a saint are carried through a field, as was the tree or image. The community at Iona perambulated a newly sown field with S. Columba's relics in time of drought, and shook his tunic three times in the air, and were rewarded by a plentiful rain, and later, by a bounteous harvest.<sup>[899](#)</sup>

Many of these local cults were pre-Celtic, but we need not therefore suppose that the Celts, or the Aryans as a whole, had no such cults.<sup>[900](#)</sup> The Aryans everywhere adopted local cults, but this they would not have done if, as is supposed, they had themselves outgrown them. The cults were local, but the Celts had similar local cults, and easily accepted those of the people they conquered. We cannot explain the persistence of such primitive cults as lie behind the great Celtic festivals, both in classical times and over the whole area of Europe among the peasantry, by referring them solely to a pre-Aryan folk. They were as much Aryan as pre-Aryan. They belong to those unchanging strata of religion which have so largely supplied the soil in which its later and more spiritual growths have flourished. And among these they still emerge, unchanged and unchanging, like the gaunt outcrops of some ancient rock formation amid rich vegetation and fragrant flowers.

<sup>[837](#)</sup>. Pliny, xvi. 45; Cæsar, vi. 18. See my article "Calendar (Celtic)" in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Rel. and Ethics*, iii. 78 f., for a full discussion of the problems involved.

<sup>[838](#)</sup>. O'Donovan, *Book of Rights*, Intro. lii f.

<sup>[839](#)</sup>. O'Donovan, li.; Bertrand, 105; Keating, 300.

<sup>[840](#)</sup>. Samhain may mean "summer-end," from *sam*, "summer," and *fuin*, "sunset" or "end," but Dr. Stokes (*US* 293) makes *samani*- mean "assembly," *i.e.* the gathering of the people to keep the feast.

- [841.](#) Keating, 125, 300.
- [842.](#) See MacBain, *CM* ix. 328.
- [843.](#) Brand, i. 390; Ramsay, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 437; *Stat. Account*, xi. 621.
- [844.](#) Hazlitt, 297-298, 340; Campbell, *Witchcraft*, 285 f.
- [845.](#) Curtin, 72.
- [846.](#) Fitzgerald, *RC* vi. 254.
- [847.](#) See Chambers, *Mediæval Stage*, App. N, for the evidence from canons and councils regarding these.
- [848.](#) Tille, *Yule and Christmas*, 96.
- [849.](#) Chambers, *Popular Rhymes*, 166.
- [850.](#) Hutchinson, *View of Northumberland*, ii. 45; Thomas, *Rev. de l'Hist. des Rel.* xxxviii. 335 f.
- [851.](#) *Patrol. Lot.* xxxix. 2001.
- [852.](#) *IT* i. 205; *RC* v. 331; Leahy, i. 57.
- [853.](#) See p. 169, *supra*.
- [854.](#) The writer has himself seen such bonfires in the Highlands. See also Hazlitt, 298; Pennant, *Tour*, ii. 47; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 515, *CFL* i. 225-226. In Egyptian mythology, Typhon assailed Horus in the form of a black swine.
- [855.](#) Keating, 300.
- [856.](#) Joyce, *SH* ii. 556; *RC* x. 214, 225, xxiv. 172; O'Grady, ii. 374; *CM* ix. 209.
- [857.](#) See Mannhardt, *Mythol. Forschung.* 333 f.; Frazer, *Adonis*, *passim*; Thomas, *Rev. de l'Hist. des Rel.* xxxviii. 325 f.
- [858.](#) Hazlitt, 35; Chambers, *Mediæval Stage*, i. 261.
- [859.](#) Chambers, *Book of Days*, ii. 492; Hazlitt, 131.
- [860.](#) Hazlitt, 97; Davies, *Extracts from Munic. Records of York*, 270.
- [861.](#) See p. 237, *supra*; *LL* 16, 213.
- [862.](#) Chambers, *Med. Stage*, i. 250 f.
- [863.](#) Cormac, s.v. "Belltaine," "Bel"; *Arch. Rev.* i. 232.
- [864.](#) D'Arbois, ii. 136.
- [865.](#) Stokes, *US* 125, 164. See his earlier derivation, dividing the word into *belt*, connected with Lithuan. *baltas*, "white," and *aine*, the termination in *sechtmaine*, "week" (*TIG* xxxv.).
- [866.](#) Need-fire (Gael. *Teinne-eiginn*, "necessity fire") was used to kindle fire in time of cattle plague. See Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* 608 f.; Martin, 113; Jamieson's *Dictionary*, s.v. "neidfyre."

- [867.](#) Cormac, s.v.; Martin, 105, says that the Druids extinguished all fires until their dues were paid. This may have been a tradition in the Hebrides.
- [868.](#) Joyce, *PN* i. 216; Hone, *Everyday Book*, i. 849, ii. 595.
- [869.](#) Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, i. 291.
- [870.](#) Hazlitt, 339, 397.
- [871.](#) Hone, *Everyday Book*, ii. 595. See p. 215, *supra*.
- [872.](#) Sinclair, *Stat. Account*, xi. 620.
- [873.](#) Martin, 105.
- [874.](#) For these usages see Ramsay, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 439 f.; Sinclair, *Stat. Account*, v. 84, xi. 620, xv. 517. For the sacramental and sacrificial use of similar loaves, see Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup>, i. 94, ii. 78; Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* iii. 1239 f.
- [875.](#) *New Stat. Account*, Wigtownshire, 208; Hazlitt, 38, 323, 340.
- [876.](#) See Miss Owen, *Folk-lore of the Musquakie Indians*, 50; Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup>, ii. 205.
- [877.](#) For notices of Beltane survivals see Keating, 300; Campbell, *Journey from Edinburgh*, i. 143; Ramsay, *Scotland and Scotsmen*, ii. 439 f.; *Old Stat. Account*, v. 84, xi. 620, xv. 517; Gregor, *Folk-lore of N.E. of Scotland*, 167. The paganism of the survivals is seen in the fact that Beltane fires were frequently prohibited by Scottish ecclesiastical councils.
- [878.](#) Meyrac, *Traditions ... des Ardennes*, 68.
- [879.](#) Bertrand, 119.
- [880.](#) *Ibid.* 407; Gaidoz, 21; Mannhardt, *Baumkultus*, 514, 523; Brand, i. 8, 323.
- [881.](#) Mannhardt, *op. cit.* 525 f.; Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup>, iii. 319.
- [882.](#) P. 234, *supra*.
- [883.](#) Frazer, *op. cit.* i. 74; Brand, i. 222, 237, 246, 318; Hone, *Everyday Book*, ii. 595; Mannhardt, *op. cit.* 177; Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* 621, 777 f.
- [884.](#) See my *Childhood of Fiction*, ch. v.
- [885.](#) Frazer, i. 82, ii. 247 f., 275; Mannhardt, 315 f.
- [886.](#) Martin, 117. The custom of walking *deiseil* round an object still survives, and, as an imitation of the sun's course, it is supposed to bring good luck or ward off evil. For the same reason the right hand turn was of good augury. Medb's charioteer, as she departed for the war, made her chariot turn to the right to repel evil omens (*LU* 55). Curiously enough, Pliny (xxviii. 2) says that the Gauls preferred the left-hand turn in their religious rites, though Athenæus refers to the right-hand turn among them. *Deiseil* is from *dekso-s*, "right," and *svel*, "to turn."
- [887.](#) Hone, i. 846; Hazlitt, ii. 346.
- [888.](#) This account of the Midsummer ritual is based on notices found in Hone, *Everyday Book*; Hazlitt, ii. 347 f.; Gaidoz, *Le Dieu Soleil*; Bertrand; Deloche, *RC* ix. 435; *Folk-Lore*, xii. 315;

Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup>, iii. 266 f.; Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* ii. 617 f.; Monnier, 186 f.

[889.](#) RC xvi. 51; Guiraud, *Les Assemblées provinciales dans l'Empire Romain*.

[890.](#) D'Arbois, i. 215, *Les Celtes*, 44; Loth, *Annales de Bretagne*, xiii. No. 2.

[891.](#) RC xvi. 51.

[892.](#) Strabo, iv. 4. 6.

[893.](#) Dion. Per. v. 570.

[894.](#) Pliny, xxii. 1.

[895.](#) Greg, *de Glor. Conf.* 477; Sulp. Sev. *Vita S. Martini*, 9; Pass. S. Symphor. Migne, *Pat. Graec.* v. 1463, 1466. The cult of Cybele had been introduced into Gaul, and the ritual here described resembles it, but we are evidently dealing here with the cult of a native goddess. See, however, Frazer, *Adonis*, 176.

[896.](#) Anwyl, *Celtic Religion*, 41.

[897.](#) See Hartland, *Science of Fairy-Tales*, 84 f.

[898.](#) Professor Rhys suggests that nudity, being a frequent symbol of submission to a conqueror, acquired a similar significance in religious rites (*AL* 180). But the magical aspect of nudity came first in time.

[899.](#) Adamnan, *Vita S. Col.* ii. 45.

[900.](#) See Gomme, *Ethnology in Folk-lore*, 30 f., *Village Community*, 114.

# Accessories of Cult

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## TEMPLES.

In primitive religion the place of worship is seldom a temple made with hands, but rather an enclosed space in which the symbol or image of the god stands. The sacredness of the god makes the place of his cult sacred. Often an open space in the forest is the scene of the regular cult. There the priests perform the sacred rites; none may enter it but themselves; and the trembling worshipper approaches it with awe lest the god should slay him if he came too near.

The earliest temples of the Gauls were sacred groves, one of which, near Massilia, is described by Lucan. No bird built in it, no animal lurked near, the leaves constantly shivered when no breeze stirred them. Altars stood in its midst, and the images of the gods were misshapen trunks of trees. Every tree was stained with sacrificial blood. The poet then describes marvels heard or seen in the grove—the earth groaning, dead yews reviving, trees surrounded with flame yet not consumed, and huge serpents twining round the oaks. The people feared to approach the grove, and even the priest would not walk there at midday or midnight lest he should then meet its divine guardian.<sup>901</sup> Dio speaks of human sacrifices offered to Andrasta in a British grove, and in 61 A.D. the woods of Mona, devoted to strange rites, were cut down by Roman soldiers.<sup>902</sup> The sacred *Dru-nemeton* of the Galatian Celts may have been a grove.<sup>903</sup> Place-names also point to the widespread existence of such groves, since the word *nemeton*, "grove," occurs in many of them, showing that the places so called had been sites of a cult. In Ireland, *fid-nemed* stood for "sacred grove."<sup>904</sup> The ancient groves were still the objects of veneration in Christian times, though fines were levied against those who still clung to the old ways.<sup>905</sup>

Sacred groves were still used in Gallo-Roman times, and the Druids may have had a preference for them, a preference which may underlie the



words of the scholiast on Lucan, that "the Druids worship the gods without temples in woods." But probably more elaborate temples, great tribal sanctuaries, existed side by side with these local groves, especially in Cisalpine Gaul, where the Boii had a temple in which were stored the spoils of war, while the Insubri had a similar temple.<sup>906</sup> These were certainly buildings. The "consecrated place" in Transalpine Gaul, which Cæsar mentions, and where at fixed periods judgments were given, might be either a grove or a temple. Cæsar uses the same phrase for sacred places where the spoils of war were heaped; these may have been groves, but Diodorus speaks of treasure collected in "temples and sacred places" (*en tois hierois chai temenesin*), and Plutarch speaks of the "temple" where the Arverni hung Cæsar's sword.<sup>907</sup> The "temple" of the Namnite women, unroofed and re-roofed in a day, must have been a building. There is no evidence that the insular Celts had temples. In Gallo-Roman times, elaborate temples, perhaps occupying sites of earlier groves or temples, sprang up over the Romano-Celtic area. They were built on Roman models, many of them were of great size, and they were dedicated to Roman or Gallo-Roman divinities.<sup>908</sup> Smaller shrines were built by grateful worshippers at sacred springs to their presiding divinity, as many inscriptions show. In the temples stood images of the gods, and here were stored sacred vessels, sometimes made of the skulls of enemies, spoils of war dedicated to the gods, money collected for sacred purposes, and war standards, especially those which bore divine symbols.

The old idea that stone circles were Druidic temples, that human sacrifices were offered on the "altar-stone," and libations of blood poured into the cup-markings, must be given up, along with much of the astronomical lore associated with the circles. Stonehenge dates from the close of the Neolithic Age, and most of the smaller circles belong to the early Bronze Age, and are probably pre-Celtic. In any case they were primarily places of sepulture. As such they would be the scene of ancestor worship, but yet not temples in the strict sense of the word. The larger circles, burial-places of great chiefs or kings, would become central places for the recurring rites of ghost-worship, possibly also rallying places of the



tribe on stated occasions. But whether this ghost-worship was ever transmuted into the cult of a god at the circles is uncertain and, indeed, unlikely. The Celts would naturally regard these places as sacred, since the ghosts of the dead, even those of a vanquished people, are always dangerous, and they also took over the myths and legends<sup>909</sup> associated with them, such, *e.g.*, as regarded the stones themselves, or trees growing within the circles, as embodiments of the dead, while they may also have used them as occasional places of secondary interment. Whether they were ever led to copy such circles themselves is uncertain, since their own methods of interment seem to have been different. We have seen that the gods may in some cases have been worshipped at tumuli, and that Lughnasadh was, at some centres, connected with commemorative cults at burial-places (mounds, not circles). But the reasons for this are obscure, nor is there any hint that other Celtic festivals were held near burial mounds. Probably such commemorative rites at places of sepulture during Lughnasadh were only part of a wider series occurring elsewhere, and we cannot assume from such vague notices that stone circles were Druidic temples where worship of an Oriental nature was carried on.

Professor Rhys is disposed to accept the old idea that Stonehenge was the temple of Apollo in the island of the Hyperboreans, mentioned by Diodorus, where the sun-god was worshipped.<sup>910</sup> But though that temple was circular, it had walls adorned with votive offerings. Nor does the temple unroofed yearly by the Namnite women imply a stone circle, for there is not the slightest particle of evidence that the circles were ever roofed in any way.<sup>911</sup> Stone circles with mystic trees growing in them, one of them with a well by which entrance was gained to Tír fa Tonn, are mentioned in Irish tales. They were connected with magic rites, but are not spoken of as temples.<sup>912</sup>

## ALTARS.

Lucan describes realistically the awful sacrifices of the Gauls on cruel altars not a whit milder than those of Diana, and he speaks of "altars piled with

offerings" in the sacred grove at Marseilles.<sup>913</sup> Cicero says that human victims were sacrificed on altars, and Tacitus describes the altars of Mona smeared with human blood.<sup>914</sup> "Druids' altars" are mentioned in the Irish "Expedition of Dathi," and Cormac speaks of *indelba*, or altars adorned with emblems.<sup>915</sup> Probably many of these altars were mere heaps of stone like the Norse *horg*, or a great block of stone. Some sacrifices, however, were too extensive to be offered on an altar, but in such cases the blood would be sprinkled upon it. Under Roman influence, Celtic altars took the form of those of the conquerors, with inscriptions containing names of native or Roman gods and bas-reliefs depicting some of these. The old idea that dolmens were Celtic altars is now abandoned. They were places of sepulture of the Neolithic or early Bronze Age, and were originally covered with a mound of earth. During the era of Celtic paganism they were therefore hidden from sight, and it is only in later times that the earth has been removed and the massive stones, arranged so as to form a species of chamber, have been laid bare.

## IMAGES.

The Gauls, according to Cæsar, possessed *plurima simulacra* of the native Mercury, but he does not refer to images of other gods. We need not infer from this that the Celts had a prejudice against images, for among the Irish Celts images are often mentioned, and in Gaul under Roman rule many images existed.

The existence of images among the Celts as among other peoples, may owe something to the cult of trees and of stones set up over the dead. The stone, associated with the dead man's spirit, became an image of himself, perhaps rudely fashioned in his likeness. A rough-hewn tree trunk became an image of the spirit or god of trees. On the other hand, some anthropomorphic images, like the palæolithic or Mycenæan figurines, may have been fashioned without the intermediary of tree-trunk or stone pillar. Maximus of Tyre says that the Celtic image of Zeus was a lofty oak, perhaps a rough-hewn trunk rather than a growing tree, and such roughly

carved tree-trunks, images of gods, are referred to by Lucan in his description of the Massilian grove.<sup>916</sup> Pillar stones set up over the graves of the dead are often mentioned in Irish texts. These would certainly be associated with the dead; indeed, existing legends show that they were believed to be tenanted by the ghosts and to have the power of motion. This suggests that they had been regarded as images of the dead. Other stones honoured in Ireland were the *cloch labrais*, an oracular stone; the *lia fail*, or coronation stone, which shouted when a king of the Milesian race seated himself upon it; and the *lia adrada*, or stone of adoration, apparently a boundary stone.<sup>917</sup> The *plurima simulacra* of the Gaulish Mercury may have been boundary stones like those dedicated to Mercury or Hermes among the Romans and Greeks. Did Cæsar conclude, or was it actually the case, that the Gauls dedicated such stones to a god of boundaries who might be equated with Mercury? Many such standing stones still exist in France, and their number must have been greater in Cæsar's time. Seeing them the objects of superstitious observances, he may have concluded that they were *simulacra* of a god. Other Romans besides himself had been struck by the resemblance of these stones to their Hermai, and perhaps the Gauls, if they did not already regard them as symbols of a god, acquiesced in the resemblance. Thus, on the menhir of Kervadel are sculptured four figures, one being that of Mercury, dating from Gallo-Roman times. Beneath another, near Peronne, a bronze statuette of Mercury was discovered.<sup>918</sup> This would seem to show that the Gauls had a cult of pillar stones associated with a god of boundaries. Cæsar probably uses the word *simulacrum* in the sense of "symbol" rather than "image," though he may have meant native images not fully carved in human shape, like the Irish *cérmand*, *cerstach*, ornamented with gold and silver, the "chief idol" of north Ireland, or like the similarly ornamented "images" of Cromm Cruaich and his satellites.<sup>919</sup> The adoration of sacred stones continued into Christian times and was much opposed by the Church.<sup>920</sup> S. Samson of Dol (sixth century) found men dancing round a *simulacrum abominabile*, which seems to have been a kind of standing stone, and having besought them to desist,

he carved a cross upon it.<sup>[921](#)</sup> Several *menhirion* in France are now similarly ornamented.<sup>[922](#)</sup>

The number of existing Gallo-Roman images shows that the Celts had not adopted a custom which was foreign to them, and they must have already possessed rude native images. The disappearance of these would be explained if they were made of perishable material. Wooden images of the *Matres* have been occasionally found, and these may be pre-Roman. Some of the images of the three-headed and crouching gods show no sign of Roman influences in their modelling, and they may have been copied from earlier images of wood. We also find divine figures on pre-Roman coins.<sup>[923](#)</sup> Certain passages in classical writings point to the existence of native images. A statue of a goddess existed in a temple at Marseilles, according to Justin, and the Galatian Celts had images of the native Juppiter and Artemis, while the conquering Celts who entered Rome bowed to the seated senators as to statues of the gods.<sup>[924](#)</sup> The Gauls placed rich ornaments on the images of the gods, and presumably these were native "idols."

"Idols" are frequently mentioned in Irish texts, and there is no doubt that these mean images.<sup>[925](#)</sup> Cormac mac Art refused to worship "idols," and was punished by the Druids.<sup>[926](#)</sup> The idols of Cromm Cruaich and his satellites, referred to in the *Dindsenchas*, were carved to represent the human form; the chief one was of gold, the others of stone. These were miraculously overthrown by S. Patrick; but in the account of the miracle the chief idol was of stone adorned with gold and silver, the others, numbering twelve, were ornamented with bronze.<sup>[927](#)</sup> They stood in Mag Slecht, and similar sacred places with groups of images evidently existed elsewhere, *e.g.* at Rath Archail, "where the Druid's altars and images are."<sup>[928](#)</sup> The lady Cessair, before coming to Ireland, is said to have taken advice of her *laimh-dhia*, or "hand gods," perhaps small images used for divination.<sup>[929](#)</sup>

For the British Celts the evidence is slender, but idolatry in the sense of "image-worship" is frequently mentioned in the lives of early saints.<sup>[930](#)</sup> Gildas also speaks of images "mouldering away within and without the deserted temples, with stiff and deformed features."<sup>[931](#)</sup> This pathetic picture

of the forsaken shrines of forgotten gods may refer to Romano-Celtic images, but the "stiff and deformed features" suggest rather native art, the art of a people unskilful at reproducing the human form, however artistic they may have been in other directions.

If the native Celts of Ireland had images, there is no reason to suppose, especially considering the evidence just adduced, that the Gauls, or at least the Druids, were antagonistic to images. This last is M. Reinach's theory, part of a wider hypothesis that the Druids were pre-Celtic, but became the priests of the Celts, who till then had no priests. The Druids prohibited image-worship, and this prohibition existed in Gaul, *ex hypothesi*, from the end of palæolithic times. Pythagoras and his school were opposed to image-worship, and the classical writers claimed a connection between the Pythagoreans and the Druids. M. Reinach thinks there must have been some analogy between them, and that was hostility to anthropomorphism. But the analogy is distinctly stated to have lain in the doctrine of immortality or metempsychosis. Had the Druids been opposed to image-worship, classical observers could not have failed to notice the fact. M. Reinach then argues that the Druids caused the erection of the megalithic monuments in Gaul, symbols not images. They are thus Druidic, though not Celtic. The monuments argue a powerful priesthood; the Druids were a powerful priesthood; therefore the Druids caused the monuments to be built. This is not a powerful argument!<sup>[932](#)</sup>

As has been seen, some purely Celtic images existed in Gaul. The Gauls, who used nothing but wood for their houses, probably knew little of the art of carving stone. They would therefore make most of their images of wood—a perishable material. The insular Celts had images, and if, as Cæsar maintained, the Druids came from Britain to Gaul, this points at least to a similarity of cult in the two regions. Youthful Gauls who aspired to Druidic knowledge went to Britain to obtain it. Would the Druids of Gaul have permitted this, had they been iconoclasts? No single text shows that the Druids had any antipathy to images, while the Gauls certainly had images of worshipful animals. Further, even if the Druids were priests of a pre-Celtic folk, they must have permitted the making of images, since many

"menhir-statues" exist on French soil, at Aveyron, Tarn, and elsewhere.<sup>933</sup> The Celts were in constant contact with image-worshipping peoples, and could hardly have failed to be influenced by them, even if such a priestly prohibition existed, just as Israel succumbed to images in spite of divine commands. That they would have been thus influenced is seen from the number of images of all kinds dating from the period after the Roman conquest.

Incidental proofs of the fondness of the Celts for images are found in ecclesiastical writings and in late survivals. The procession of the image of Berecynthia has already been described, and such processions were common in Gaul, and imply a regular folk-custom. S. Martin of Tours stopped a funeral procession believing it to be such a pagan rite.<sup>934</sup> Councils and edicts prohibited these processions in Gaul, but a more effectual way was to Christianise them. The Rogation tide processions with crucifix and Madonna, and the carrying of S. John's image at the Midsummer festivals, were a direct continuation of the older practices. Images were often broken by Christian saints in Gaul, as they had been over-turned by S. Patrick in Ireland. "Stiff and deformed" many of them must have been, if one may judge from the *Groah-goard* or "Venus of Quinipily," for centuries the object of superstitious rites in Brittany.<sup>935</sup> With it may be compared the fetich-stone or image of which an old woman in the island of Inniskea, the guardian of a sacred well, had charge. It was kept wrapped up to hide it from profane eyes, but at certain periods it was brought out for adoration.<sup>936</sup>

The images and bas-reliefs of the Gallo-Roman period fall mainly into two classes. In the first class are those representing native divinities, like Esus, Tarvos Trigaranos, Smertullos, Cernunnos, the horned and crouching gods, the god with the hammer, and the god with the wheel. Busts and statues of some water-goddesses exist, but more numerous are the representations of Epona. One of these is provided with a box pedestal in which offerings might be placed. The *Matres* are frequently figured, usually as three seated figures with baskets of fruit or flowers, or with one or more



infants, like the Madonna. Images of triple-headed gods, supposed to be Cernunnos, have been found, but are difficult to place in any category.<sup>[937](#)</sup>

To the images of the second class is usually attached the Roman name of a god, but generally the native Celtic name is added, but the images themselves are of the traditional Roman type. Among statues and statuettes of bronze, that of Mercury occurs most often. This may point to the fact that Cæsar's *simulacra* of the native Mercury were images, and that the old preference for representing this god continued in Roman times. Small figures of divinities in white clay have been found in large numbers, and may have been *ex votos* or images of household *lararia*.<sup>[938](#)</sup>

## SYMBOLS.

Images of the gods in Gaul can be classified by means of their symbols—the mallet and cup (a symbol of plenty) borne by the god with the hammer, the wheel of the sun-god, the cornucopia and torque carried by Cernunnos. Other symbols occur on images, altars, monuments, and coins. These are the swastika and triskele, probably symbols of the sun;<sup>[939](#)</sup> single or concentric circles, sometimes with rays;<sup>[940](#)</sup> crosses; and a curious S figure. The triskele and the circles are sometimes found on faces figured on coins. They may therefore have been tattoo markings of a symbolic character. The circle and cross are often incised on bronze images of Dispater. Much speculation has been aroused by the S figure, which occurs on coins, while nine models of this symbol hang from a ring carried by the god with the wheel, but the most probable is that which sees in it a thunderbolt.<sup>[941](#)</sup> But lacking any old text interpreting these various symbols, all explanations of them must be conjectural. Some of them are not purely Celtic, but are of world-wide occurrence.

## CULT OF WEAPONS.

Here some reference may be made to the Celtic cult of weapons. As has been seen, a hammer is the symbol of one god, and it is not unlikely that a

cult of the hammer had preceded that of the god to whom the hammer was given as a symbol. Esus is also represented with an axe. We need not repeat what has already been said regarding the primitive and universal cult of hammer or axe,<sup>942</sup> but it is interesting to notice, in connection with other evidence for a Celtic cult of weapons, that there is every reason to believe that the phrase *sub ascia dedicare*, which occurs in inscriptions on tombs from Gallia Lugdunensis, usually with the figure of an axe incised on the stone, points to the cult of the axe, or of a god whose symbol the axe was.<sup>943</sup> In Irish texts the power of speech is attributed to weapons, but, according to the Christian scribe, this was because demons spoke from them, for the people worshipped arms in those days.<sup>944</sup> Thus it may have been believed that spirits tenanted weapons, or that weapons had souls. Evidence of the cult itself is found in the fact that on Gaulish coins a sword is figured, stuck in the ground, or driving a chariot, or with a warrior dancing before it, or held in the hand of a dancing warrior.<sup>945</sup> The latter are ritual acts, and resemble that described by Spenser as performed by Irish warriors in his day, who said prayers or incantations before a sword stuck in the earth.<sup>946</sup> Swords were also addressed in songs composed by Irish bards, and traditional remains of such songs are found in Brittany.<sup>947</sup> They represent the chants of the ancient cult. Oaths were taken by weapons, and the weapons were believed to turn against those who lied.<sup>948</sup> The magical power of weapons, especially of those over which incantations had been said, is frequently referred to in traditional tales and Irish texts.<sup>949</sup> A reminiscence of the cult or of the magical power of weapons may be found in the wonderful "glaives of light" of Celtic folk-tales, and the similar mystical weapon of the Arthurian romances.

<sup>901</sup>. Lucan, *Pharsalia*, iii. 399 f.

<sup>902</sup>. Dio Cass. lxii. 7; Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 30.

<sup>903</sup>. Strabo, xii. 51. *Drunemeton* may mean "great temple" (D'Arbois, *Les Celtes*, 203).

<sup>904</sup>. *Antient Laws of Ireland*, i. 164.



- [905.](#) Holder, ii. 712. Cf. "Indiculus" in Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* 1739, "de sacris silvarum, quas nimidas (= nemeta) vocant."
- [906.](#) Livy, xxiii. 24; Polyb. ii. 32.
- [907.](#) Cæsar, vi. 13, 17; Diod. Sic. v. 27; Plutarch, *Cæsar*, 26.
- [908.](#) See examples in Dom Martin, i. 134 f.; cf. Greg. Tours, *Hist. Franc.* i. 30.
- [909.](#) See Reinach, "Les monuments de pierre brute dans le langage et les croyances populaires," *Rev. Arch.* 1893, i. 339; Evans, "The Roll-Right Stones," *Folk-Lore*, vi. 20 f.
- [910.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 194; Diod. Sic. ii. 47.
- [911.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, 197.
- [912.](#) Joyce, *OCR* 246; Kennedy, 271.
- [913.](#) Lucan, i. 443, iii. 399f.
- [914.](#) Cicero, *pro Fonteio*, x. 21; Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 30. Cf. Pomp. Mela, iii. 2. 18.
- [915.](#) O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 284; Cormac, 94. Cf. *IT* iii. 211, for the practice of circumambulating altars.
- [916.](#) Max. Tyr. *Dissert.* viii. 8; Lucan, iii. 412f.
- [917.](#) *Antient Laws of Ireland*, iv. 142.
- [918.](#) *Rev. Arch.* i. pl. iii-v.; Reinach, *RC* xi. 224, xiii. 190.
- [919.](#) Stokes, *Martyr. of Oengus*, 186-187.
- [920.](#) See the Twenty-third Canon of Council of Arles, the Twenty-third of the Council of Tours, 567, and ch. 65 of the *Capitularia*, 789.
- [921.](#) Mabillon, *Acta*, i. 177.
- [922.](#) Reinach, *Rev. Arch.* 1893, xxi. 335.
- [923.](#) Blanchet, i. 152-153, 386.
- [924.](#) Justin, xliii. 5; Strabo, xii. 5. 2; Plutarch, *de Virt. Mul.* xx.; Livy, v. 41.
- [925.](#) Cormac, 94.
- [926.](#) Keating, 356. See also Stokes, *Martyr. of Oengus*, 186; *RC* xii. 427, § 15; Joyce, *SH* 274 f.
- [927.](#) *LL* 213b; *Trip. Life*, i. 90, 93.
- [928.](#) O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 284.
- [929.](#) Keating, 49.
- [930.](#) Jocelyn, *Vita S. Kentig.* 27, 32, 34; Ailred, *Vita S. Ninian.* 6.
- [931.](#) Gildas, § 4.
- [932.](#) For the whole argument see Reinach, *RC* xiii. 189 f. Bertrand, *Rev. Arch.* xv. 345, supports a similar theory, and, according to both writers, Gallo-Roman art was the result of the weakening of Druidic power by the Romans.

- [933.](#) L'Abbé Hermet, Assoc. pour l'avancement des Sciences, *Compte Rendu*, 1900, ii. 747; *L'Anthropologie*, v. 147.
- [934.](#) *Corp. Scrip. Eccl. Lat.* i. 122.
- [935.](#) Monnier, 362. The image bears part of an inscription ... LIT... and it has been thought that this read ILITHYIA originally. The name is in keeping with the rites still in use before the image. This would make it date from Roman times. If so, it is a poor specimen of the art of the period. But it may be an old native image to which later the name of the Roman goddess was given.
- [936.](#) Roden, *Progress of the Reformation in Ireland*, 51. The image was still existing in 1851.
- [937.](#) For figures of most of these, see *Rev. Arch.* vols. xvi., xviii., xix., xxxvi.; *RC* xvii. 45, xviii. 254, xx. 309, xxii. 159, xxiv. 221; Bertrand, *passim*; Courcelle-Seneuil, *Les Dieux Gaulois d'après les Monuments Figures*, Paris, 1910.
- [938.](#) See Courcelle-Seneuil, *op. cit.*; Reinach, *BF* *passim*, *Catalogue Sommaire du Musée des Ant. nat.*<sup>4</sup> 115-116.
- [939.](#) Reinach, *Catal.* 29, 87; *Rev. Arch.* xvi. 17; Blanchet, i. 169, 316; Huchet, *L'art gaulois*, ii. 8.
- [940.](#) Blanchet, i. 158; Reinach, *BF* 143, 150, 152.
- [941.](#) Blanchet, i. 17; Flouest, *Deux Stèles* (Append.), Paris, 1885; Reinach, *BF* 33.
- [942.](#) P. 30, *supra*.
- [943.](#) Hirschfeld in *CIL* xiii. 256.
- [944.](#) *RC* xii. 107; Joyce, *SH* i. 131.
- [945.](#) Blanchet, i. 160 f.; Muret de la Tour, *Catalogue*, 6922, 6941, etc.
- [946.](#) *View of the State of Ireland*, 57.
- [947.](#) *RC* xx. 7; Martin, *Études de la Myth. Celt.* 164.
- [948.](#) *IT* i. 206; *RC* ix. 144.
- [949.](#) *CM* xiii. 168 f.; Miss Hull, 44, 221, 223.

# The Druids

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Pliny thought that the name "Druid" was a Greek appellation derived from the Druidic cult of the oak (*drus*).<sup>950</sup> The word, however, is purely Celtic, and its meaning probably implies that, like the sorcerer and medicine-man everywhere, the Druid was regarded as "the knowing one." It is composed of two parts—*dru-*, regarded by M. D'Arbois as an intensive, and *vids*, from *vid*, "to know," or "see."<sup>951</sup> Hence the Druid was "the very knowing or wise one." It is possible, however, that *dru-* is connected with the root which gives the word "oak" in Celtic speech—Gaulish *deruo*, Irish *dair*, Welsh *derw*—and that the oak, occupying a place in the cult, was thus brought into relation with the name of the priesthood. The Gaulish form of the name was probably *druis*, the Old Irish was *drai*. The modern forms in Irish and Scots Gaelic, *druí* and *draoi* mean "sorcerer."

M. D'Arbois and others, accepting Cæsar's dictum that "the system (of Druidism) is thought to have been devised in Britain, and brought thence into Gaul," maintain that the Druids were priests of the Goidels in Britain, who imposed themselves upon the Gaulish conquerors of the Goidels, and that Druidism then passed over into Gaul about 200 B.C.<sup>952</sup> But it is hardly likely that, even if the Druids were accepted as priests by conquering Gauls in Britain, they should have affected the Gauls of Gaul who were outside the reflex influence of the conquered Goidels, and should have there obtained that power which they possessed. Goidels and Gauls were allied by race and language and religion, and it would be strange if they did not both possess a similar priesthood. Moreover, the Goidels had been a continental people, and Druidism was presumably flourishing among them then. Why did it not influence kindred Celtic tribes without Druids, *ex hypothesi*, at that time? Further, if we accept Professor Meyer's theory that no Goidel set foot in Britain until the second century A.D., the Gauls could not have received the Druidic priesthood from the Goidels.

Cæsar merely says, "it is thought (*existimatur*) that Druidism came to Gaul from Britain."<sup>953</sup> It was a pious opinion, perhaps his own, or one based on the fact that those who wished to perfect themselves in Druidic art went to Britain. This may have been because Britain had been less open to foreign influences than Gaul, and its Druids, unaffected by these, were thought to be more powerful than those of Gaul. Pliny, on the other hand, seems to think that Druidism passed over into Britain from Gaul.<sup>954</sup>

Other writers—Sir John Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, Sir G.L. Gomme, and M. Reinach—support on different grounds the theory that the Druids were a pre-Celtic priesthood, accepted by the Celtic conquerors. Sir John Rh<sup>^</sup>ys thinks that the Druidism of the aborigines of Gaul and Britain made terms with the Celtic conquerors. It was accepted by the Goidels, but not by the Brythons. Hence in Britain there were Brythons without Druids, aborigines under the sway of Druidism, and Goidels who combined Aryan polytheism with Druidism. Druidism was also the religion of the aborigines from the Baltic to Gibraltar, and was accepted by the Gauls.<sup>955</sup> But if so, it is difficult to see why the Brythons, akin to them, did not accept it. Our knowledge of Brythonic religion is too scanty for us to prove that the Druids had or had not sway over them, but the presumption is that they had. Nor is there any historical evidence to show that the Druids were originally a non-Celtic priesthood. Everywhere they appear as the supreme and dominant priesthood of the Celts, and the priests of a conquered people could hardly have obtained such power over the conquerors. The relation of the Celts to the Druids is quite different from that of conquerors, who occasionally resort to the medicine-men of the conquered folk because they have stronger magic or greater influence with the autochthonous gods. The Celts did not resort to the Druids occasionally; *ex hypothesi* they accepted them completely, were dominated by them in every department of life, while their own priests, if they had any, accepted this order of things without a murmur. All this is incredible. The picture drawn by Cæsar, Strabo, and others of the Druids and their position among the Celts as judges, choosers of tribal chiefs and kings, teachers, as well as ministers of religion, suggests rather

that they were a native Celtic priesthood, long established among the people.

Sir G.L. Gomme supports the theory that the Druids were a pre-Celtic priesthood, because, in his opinion, much of their belief in magic as well as their use of human sacrifice and the redemption of one life by another, is opposed to "Aryan sentiment." Equally opposed to this are their functions of settling controversies, judging, settling the succession to property, and arranging boundaries. These views are supported by a comparison of the position of the Druids relatively to the Celts with that of non-Aryan persons in India who render occasional priestly services to Hindu village communities.<sup>956</sup> Whether this comparison of occasional Hindu custom with Celtic usage two thousand years ago is just, may be questioned. As already seen, it was no mere occasional service which the Druids rendered to the Celts, and it is this which makes it difficult to credit this theory. Had the Celtic house-father been priest and judge in his own clan, would he so readily have surrendered his rights to a foreign and conquered priesthood? On the other hand, kings and chiefs among the Celts probably retained some priestly functions, derived from the time when the offices of the priest-king had not been differentiated. Cæsar's evidence certainly does not support the idea that "it is only among the rudest of the so-called Celtic tribes that we find this superimposing of an apparently official priesthood." According to him, the power of the Druids was universal in Gaul, and had their position really corresponded to that of the pariah priests of India, occasional priests of Hindu villages, the determined hostility of the Roman power to them because they wielded such an enormous influence over Celtic thought and life, is inexplicable. If, further, Aryan sentiment was so opposed to Druidic customs, why did Aryan Celts so readily accept the Druids? In this case the receiver is as bad as the thief. Sir G.L. Gomme clings to the belief that the Aryans were people of a comparatively high civilisation, who had discarded, if they ever possessed, a savage "past." But old beliefs and customs still survive through growing civilisation, and if the views of Professor Sergi and others are correct, the Aryans were even less civilised than the peoples whom they conquered.<sup>957</sup> Shape-shifting, magic,

human sacrifice, priestly domination, were as much Aryan as non-Aryan, and if the Celts had a comparatively pure religion, why did they so soon allow it to be defiled by the puerile superstitions of the Druids?

M. Reinach, as we have seen, thinks that the Celts had no images, because these were prohibited by their priests. This prohibition was pre-Celtic in Gaul, since there are no Neolithic images, though there are great megalithic structures, suggesting the existence of a great religious aristocracy. This aristocracy imposed itself on the Celts.<sup>958</sup> We have seen that there is no reason for believing that the Celts had no images, hence this argument is valueless. M. Reinach then argues that the Celts accepted Druidism *en bloc*, as the Romans accepted Oriental cults and the Greeks the native Pelasgic cults. But neither Romans nor Greeks abandoned their own faith. Were the Celts a people without priests and without religion? We know that they must have accepted many local cults, but that they adopted the whole aboriginal faith and its priests *en bloc* is not credible. M. Reinach also holds that when the Celts appear in history Druidism was in its decline; the Celt, or at least the military caste among the Celts, was reasserting itself. But the Druids do not appear as a declining body in the pages of Cæsar, and their power was still supreme, to judge by the hostility of the Roman Government to them. If the military caste rebelled against them, this does not prove that they were a foreign body. Such a strife is seen wherever priest and soldier form separate castes, each desiring to rule, as in Egypt.

Other writers argue that we do not find Druids existing in the Danube region, in Cisalpine territory, nor in Transalpine Gaul, "outside the limits of the region occupied by the Celtæ."<sup>959</sup> This could only have weight if any of the classical writers had composed a formal treatise on the Druids, showing exactly the regions where they existed. They merely describe Druidism as a general Celtic institution, or as they knew it in Gaul or Britain, and few of them have any personal knowledge of it. There is no reason to believe that Druids did not exist wherever there were Celts. The Druids and Semnotheoi of the Celts and Galatæ referred to c. 200 B.C. were apparently priests of other Celts than those of Gaul, and Celtic groups of Cisalpine Gaul had priests, though these are not formally styled Druids.<sup>960</sup> The argument *ex*

*silentio* is here of little value, since the references to the Druids are so brief, and it tells equally against their non-Celtic origin, since we do not hear of Druids in Aquitania, a non-Celtic region.<sup>961</sup>

The theory of the non-Celtic origin of the Druids assumes that the Celts had no priests, or that these were effaced by the Druids. The Celts had priests called *gutuatrici* attached to certain temples, their name perhaps meaning "the speakers," those who spoke to the gods.<sup>962</sup> The functions of the Druids were much more general, according to this theory, hence M. D'Arbois supposes that, before their intrusion, the Celts had no other priests than the *gutuatrici*.<sup>963</sup> But the probability is that they were a Druidic class, ministers of local sanctuaries, and related to the Druids as the Levites were to the priests of Israel, since the Druids were a composite priesthood with a variety of functions. If the priests and servants of Belenos, described by Ausonius and called by him *oedituus Beleni*, were *gutuatrici*, then the latter must have been connected with the Druids, since he says they were of Druidic stock.<sup>964</sup> Lucan's "priest of the grove" may have been a *gutuatros*, and the priests (*sacerdotes*) and other ministers (*antistites*) of the Boii may have been Druids properly so called and *gutuatrici*.<sup>965</sup> Another class of temple servants may have existed. Names beginning with the name of a god and ending in *gnatos*, "accustomed to," "beloved of," occur in inscriptions, and may denote persons consecrated from their youth to the service of a grove or temple. On the other hand, the names may mean no more than that those bearing them were devoted to the cult of one particular god.

Our supposition that the *gutuatrici* were a class of Druids is supported by classical evidence, which tends to show that the Druids were a great inclusive priesthood with different classes possessing different functions—priestly, prophetic, magical, medical, legal, and poetical. Cæsar attributes these to the Druids as a whole, but in other writers they are in part at least in the hands of different classes. Diodorus refers to the Celtic philosophers and theologians (Druids), diviners, and bards, as do also Strabo and Timagenes, Strabo giving the Greek form of the native name for the diviners, (*ouateis*), the Celtic form being probably *vátis* (Irish, *fáith*).<sup>966</sup> These may have been also poets, since *vátis* means both singer and poet; but in all three writers



the bards are a fairly distinct class, who sing the deeds of famous men (so Timagenes). Druid and diviner were also closely connected, since the Druids studied nature and moral philosophy, and the diviners were also students of nature, according to Strabo and Timagenes. No sacrifice was complete without a Druid, say Diodorus and Strabo, but both speak of the diviners as concerned with sacrifice. Druids also prophesied as well as diviners, according to Cicero and Tacitus.<sup>967</sup> Finally, Lucan mentions only Druids and bards.<sup>968</sup> Diviners were thus probably a Druidic sub-class, standing midway between the Druids proper and the bards, and partaking of some of the functions of both. Pliny speaks of "Druids and this race of prophets and doctors,"<sup>969</sup> and this suggests that some were priests, some diviners, while some practised an empiric medical science.

On the whole this agrees with what is met with in Ireland, where the Druids, though appearing in the texts mainly as magicians, were also priests and teachers. Side by side with them were the *Filid*, "learned poets,"<sup>970</sup> composing according to strict rules of art, and higher than the third class, the Bards. The *Filid*, who may also have been known as *Fáthi*, "prophets,"<sup>971</sup> were also diviners according to strict rules of augury, while some of these auguries implied a sacrifice. The Druids were also diviners and prophets. When the Druids were overthrown at the coming of Christianity, the *Filid* remained as a learned class, probably because they had abandoned all pagan practices, while the Bards were reduced to a comparatively low status. M. D'Arbois supposes that there was rivalry between the Druids and the *Filid*, who made common cause with the Christian missionaries, but this is not supported by evidence. The three classes in Gaul—Druids, *Vates*, and Bards—thus correspond to the three classes in Ireland—Druids, *Fáthi* or *Filid*, and Bards.<sup>972</sup>

We may thus conclude that the Druids were a purely Celtic priesthood, belonging both to the Goidelic and Gaulish branches of the Celts. The idea that they were not Celtic is sometimes connected with the supposition that Druidism was something superadded to Celtic religion from without, or that Celtic polytheism was not part of the creed of the Druids, but sanctioned by



them, while they had a definite theological system with only a few gods.<sup>973</sup> These are the ideas of writers who see in the Druids an occult and esoteric priesthood. The Druids had grown up *pari passu* with the growth of the native religion and magic. Where they had become more civilised, as in the south of Gaul, they may have given up many magical practices, but as a class they were addicted to magic, and must have taken part in local cults as well as in those of the greater gods. That they were a philosophic priesthood advocating a pure religion among polytheists is a baseless theory. Druidism was not a formal system outside Celtic religion. It covered the whole ground of Celtic religion; in other words, it was that religion itself.

The Druids are first referred to by pseudo-Aristotle and Sotion in the second century B.C., the reference being preserved by Diogenes Laertius: "There are among the Celtæ and Galatæ those called Druids and Semnotheoi."<sup>974</sup> The two words may be synonymous, or they may describe two classes of priests, or, again, the Druids may have been Celtic, and the Semnotheoi Galatic (? Galatian) priests. Cæsar's account comes next in time. Later writers give the Druids a lofty place and speak vaguely of the Druidic philosophy and science. Cæsar also refers to their science, but both he and Strabo speak of their human sacrifices. Suetonius describes their religion as cruel and savage, and Mela, who speaks of their learning, regards their human sacrifices as savagery.<sup>975</sup> Pliny says nothing of the Druids as philosophers, but hints at their priestly functions, and connects them with magico-medical rites.<sup>976</sup> These divergent opinions are difficult to account for. But as the Romans gained closer acquaintance with the Druids, they found less philosophy and more superstition among them. For their cruel rites and hostility to Rome, they sought to suppress them, but this they never would have done had the Druids been esoteric philosophers. It has been thought that Pliny's phrase, "Druids and that race of prophets and doctors," signifies that, through Roman persecution, the Druids were reduced to a kind of medicine-men.<sup>977</sup> But the phrase rather describes the varied functions of the Druids, as has been seen, nor does it refer to the state to which the repressive edict reduced them, but to that in which it found them. Pliny's information was also limited.

The vague idea that the Druids were philosophers was repeated parrot-like by writer after writer, who regarded barbaric races as Rousseau and his school looked upon the "noble savage." Roman writers, sceptical of a future life, were fascinated by the idea of a barbaric priesthood teaching the doctrine of immortality in the wilds of Gaul. For this teaching the poet Lucan sang their praises. The Druids probably first impressed Greek and Latin observers by their magic, their organisation, and the fact that, like many barbaric priesthoods, but unlike those of Greece and Rome, they taught certain doctrines. Their knowledge was divinely conveyed to them; "they speak the language of the gods;"<sup>978</sup> hence it was easy to read anything into this teaching. Thus the Druidic legend rapidly grew. On the other hand, modern writers have perhaps exaggerated the force of the classical evidence. When we read of Druidic associations we need not regard these as higher than the organised priesthoods of barbarians. Their doctrine of metempsychosis, if it was really taught, involved no ethical content as in Pythagoreanism. Their astronomy was probably astrological<sup>979</sup>; their knowledge of nature a series of cosmogonic myths and speculations. If a true Druidic philosophy and science had existed, it is strange that it is always mentioned vaguely and that it exerted no influence upon the thought of the time.

Classical sentiment also found a connection between the Druidic and Pythagorean systems, the Druids being regarded as conforming to the doctrines and rules of the Greek philosopher.<sup>980</sup> It is not improbable that some Pythagorean doctrines may have reached Gaul, but when we examine the point at which the two systems were supposed to meet, namely, the doctrine of metempsychosis and immortality, upon which the whole idea of this relationship was founded, there is no real resemblance. There are Celtic myths regarding the rebirth of gods and heroes, but the eschatological teaching was apparently this, that the soul was clothed with a body in the other-world. There was no doctrine of a series of rebirths on this earth as a punishment for sin. The Druidic teaching of a bodily immortality was mistakenly assumed to be the same as the Pythagorean doctrine of the soul reincarnated in body after body. Other points of resemblance were then

discovered. The organisation of the Druids was assumed by Ammianus to be a kind of corporate life—*sodaliciis adstricti consortiis*—while the Druidic mind was always searching into lofty things,<sup>981</sup> but those who wrote most fully of the Druids knew nothing of this.

The Druids, like the priests of all religions, doubtless sought after such knowledge as was open to them, but this does not imply that they possessed a recondite philosophy or a secret theology. They were governed by the ideas current among all barbaric communities, and they were at once priests, magicians, doctors, and teachers. They would not allow their sacred hymns to be written down, but taught them in secret,<sup>982</sup> as is usual wherever the success of hymn or prayer depends upon the right use of the words and the secrecy observed in imparting them to others. Their ritual, as far as is known to us, differs but little from that of other barbarian folk, and it included human sacrifice and divination with the victim's body. They excluded the guilty from a share in the cult—the usual punishment meted out to the tabu-breaker in all primitive societies.

The idea that the Druids taught a secret doctrine—monotheism, pantheism, or the like—is unsupported by evidence. Doubtless they communicated secrets to the initiated, as is done in barbaric mysteries everywhere, but these secrets consist of magic and mythic formulæ, the exhibition of *Sacra*, and some teaching about the gods or about moral duties. These are kept secret, not because they are abstract doctrines, but because they would lose their value and because the gods would be angry if they were made too common. If the Druids taught religious and moral matters secretly, these were probably no more than an extension of the threefold maxim inculcated by them according to Diogenes Laertius: "To worship the gods, to do no evil, and to exercise courage."<sup>983</sup> To this would be added cosmogonic myths and speculations, and magic and religious formulæ. This will become more evident as we examine the position and power of the Druids.

In Gaul, and to some extent in Ireland, the Druids formed a priestly corporation—a fact which helped classical observers to suppose that they lived together like the Pythagorean communities. While the words of

Ammianus—*sodaliciis adstricti consortiis*—may imply no more than some kind of priestly organisation, M. Bertrand founds on them a theory that the Druids were a kind of monks living a community life, and that Irish monasticism was a transformation of this system.<sup>984</sup> This is purely imaginative. Irish Druids had wives and children, and the Druid Diviciacus was a family man, while Cæsar says not a word of community life among the Druids. The hostility of Christianity to the Druids would have prevented any copying of their system, and Irish monasticism was modelled on that of the Continent. Druidic organisation probably denoted no more than that the Druids were bound by certain ties, that they were graded in different ranks or according to their functions, and that they practised a series of common cults. In Gaul one chief Druid had authority over the others, the position being an elective one.<sup>985</sup> The insular Druids may have been similarly organised, since we hear of a chief Druid, *primus magus*, while the *Filid* had an *Ard-file*, or chief, elected to his office.<sup>986</sup> The priesthood was not a caste, but was open to those who showed aptitude for it. There was a long novitiate, extending even to twenty years, just as, in Ireland, the novitiate of the *File* lasted from seven to twelve years.<sup>987</sup>

The Druids of Gaul assembled annually in a central spot, and there settled disputes, because they were regarded as the most just of men.<sup>988</sup> Individual Druids also decided disputes or sat as judges in cases of murder. How far it was obligatory to bring causes before them is unknown, but those who did not submit to a decision were interdicted from the sacrifices, and all shunned them. In other words, they were tabued. A magico-religious sanction thus enforced the judgments of the Druids. In Galatia the twelve tetrarchs had a council of three hundred men, and met in a place called Drunemeton to try cases of murder.<sup>989</sup> Whether it is philologically permissible to connect *Dru-* with the corresponding syllable in "Druid" or not, the likeness to the Gaulish assembly at a "consecrated place," perhaps a grove (*nemeton*), is obvious. We do not know that Irish Druids were judges, but the *Filid* exercised judgments, and this may be a relic of their connection with the Druids.<sup>990</sup>

Diodorus describes the Druids exhorting combatants to peace, and taming them like wild beasts by enchantment.<sup>991</sup> This suggests interference to prevent the devastating power of the blood-feud or of tribal wars. They also appear to have exercised authority in the election of rulers. Convictolitanis was elected to the magistracy by the priests in Gaul, "according to the custom of the State."<sup>992</sup> In Ireland, after partaking of the flesh of a white bull, probably a sacrificial animal, a man lay down to sleep, while four Druids chanted over him "to render his witness truthful." He then saw in a vision the person who should be elected king, and what he was doing at the moment.<sup>993</sup> Possibly the Druids used hypnotic suggestion; the medium was apparently clairvoyant.

Dio Chrysostom alleges that kings were ministers of the Druids, and could do nothing without them.<sup>994</sup> This agrees on the whole with the witness of Irish texts. Druids always accompany the king, and have great influence over him. According to a passage in the *Táin*, "the men of Ulster must not speak before the king, the king must not speak before his Druid," and even Conchobar was silent until the Druid Cathbad had spoken.<sup>995</sup> This power, resembling that of many other priesthoods, must have helped to balance that of the warrior class, and it is the more credible when we recall the fact that the Druids claimed to have made the universe.<sup>996</sup> The priest-kingship may have been an old Celtic institution, and this would explain why, once the offices were separated, priests had or claimed so much political power.

That political power must have been enhanced by their position as teachers, and it is safe to say that submission to their powers was inculcated by them. Both in Gaul and in Ireland they taught others than those who intended to become Druids.<sup>997</sup> As has been seen, their teachings were not written down, but transmitted orally. They taught immortality, believing that thus men would be roused to valour, buttressing patriotism with dogma. They also imparted "many things regarding the stars and their motions, the extent of the universe and the earth, the nature of things, and the power and might of the immortal gods." Strabo also speaks of their teaching in moral

science.<sup>998</sup> As has been seen, it is easy to exaggerate all this. Their astronomy was probably of a humble kind and mingled with astrology; their natural philosophy a mass of cosmogonic myths and speculations; their theology was rather mythology; their moral philosophy a series of maxims such as are found in all barbaric communities. Their medical lore, to judge from what Pliny says, was largely magical. Some Druids, *e.g.* in the south of Gaul, may have had access to classical learning, and Cæsar speaks of the use of Greek characters among them. This could hardly have been general, and in any case must have superseded the use of a native script, to which the use of ogams in Ireland, and perhaps also in Gaul, was supplementary. The Irish Druids may have had written books, for King Loegaire desired that S. Patrick's books and those of the Druids should be submitted to the ordeal by water as a test of their owners' claims.<sup>999</sup>

In religious affairs the Druids were supreme, since they alone "knew the gods and divinities of heaven."<sup>1000</sup> They superintended and arranged all rites and attended to "public and private sacrifices," and "no sacrifice was complete without the intervention of a Druid."<sup>1001</sup> The dark and cruel rites of the Druids struck the Romans with horror, and they form a curious contrast to their alleged "philosophy." They used divination and had regular formulæ of incantation as well as ritual acts by which they looked into the future.<sup>1002</sup> Before all matters of importance, especially before warlike expeditions, their advice was sought because they could scan the future.

Name-giving and a species of baptism were performed by the Druids or on their initiative. Many examples of this occur in Irish texts, thus of Conall Cernach it is said, "Druids came to baptize the child into heathenism, and they sang the heathen baptism (*baithis geintlídhe*) over the little child", and of Ailill that he was "baptized in Druidic streams".<sup>1003</sup> In Welsh story we read that Gwri was "baptized with the baptism which was usual at that time".<sup>1004</sup> Similar illustrations are common at name-giving among many races,<sup>1005</sup> and it is probable that the custom in the Hebrides of the midwife dropping three drops of water on the child *in Nomine* and giving it a temporary name, is a survival of this practice. The regular baptism takes



place later, but this preliminary rite keeps off fairies and ensures burial in consecrated ground, just as the pagan rite was protective and admitted to the tribal privileges.<sup>[1006](#)</sup>

In the burial rites, which in Ireland consisted of a lament, sacrifices, and raising a stone inscribed with ogams over the grave, Druids took part. The Druid Dergdamsa pronounced a discourse over the Ossianic hero Mag-neid, buried him with his arms, and chanted a rune. The ogam inscription would also be of Druidic composition, and as no sacrifice was complete without the intervention of Druids, they must also have assisted at the lavish sacrifices which occurred at Celtic funerals.

Pliny's words, "the Druids and that race of prophets and doctors", suggest that the medical art may have been in the hands of a special class of Druids though all may have had a smattering of it. It was mainly concerned with the use of herbs, and was mixed up with magical rites, which may have been regarded as of more importance than the actual medicines used.<sup>[1007](#)</sup> In Ireland Druids also practised the healing art. Thus when Cúchulainn was ill, Emer said, "If it had been Fergus, Cúchulainn would have taken no rest till he had found a Druid able to discover the cause of that illness."<sup>[1008](#)</sup> But other persons, not referred to as Druids, are mentioned as healers, one of them a woman, perhaps a reminiscence of the time when the art was practised by women.<sup>[1009](#)</sup> These healers may, however, have been attached to the Druidic corporation in much the same way as were the bards.

Still more important were the magical powers of the Druids—giving or withholding sunshine or rain, causing storms, making women and cattle fruitful, using spells, rhyming to death, exercising shape-shifting and invisibility, and producing a magic sleep, possibly hypnotic. They were also in request as poisoners.<sup>[1010](#)</sup> Since the Gauls went to Britain to perfect themselves in Druidic science, it is possible that the insular Druids were more devoted to magic than those of Gaul, but since the latter are said to have "tamed the people as wild beasts are tamed", it is obvious that this refers to their powers as magicians rather than to any recondite philosophy possessed by them. Yet they were clear-sighted enough to use every means

by which they might gain political power, and some of them may have been open to the influence of classical learning even before the Roman invasion. In the next chapter the magic of the Druids will be described in detail.

The Druids, both in Gaul (at the mistletoe rite) and in Ireland, were dressed in white, but Strabo speaks of their scarlet and gold embroidered robes, their golden necklets and bracelets.<sup>[1011](#)</sup> Again, the chief Druid of the king of Erin wore a coloured cloak and had earrings of gold, and in another instance a Druid wears a bull's hide and a white-speckled bird headpiece with fluttering wings.<sup>[1012](#)</sup> There was also some special tonsure used by the Druids,<sup>[1013](#)</sup> which may have denoted servitude to the gods, as it was customary for a warrior to vow his hair to a divinity if victory was granted him. Similarly the Druid's hair would be presented to the gods, and the tonsure would mark their minister.

Some writers have tried to draw a distinction between the Druids of Gaul and of Ireland, especially in the matter of their priestly functions.<sup>[1014](#)</sup> But, while a few passages in Irish texts do suggest that the Irish Druids were priests taking part in sacrifices, etc., nearly all passages relating to cult or ritual seem to have been deliberately suppressed. Hence the Druids appear rather as magicians—a natural result, since, once the people became Christian, the priestly character of the Druids would tend to be lost sight of. Like the Druids of Gaul, they were teachers and took part in political affairs, and this shows that they were more than mere magicians. In Irish texts the word "Druid" is somewhat loosely used and is applied to kings and poets, perhaps because they had been pupils of the Druids. But it is impossible to doubt that the Druids in Ireland fulfilled functions of a public priesthood. They appear in connection with all the colonies which came to Erin, the annalists regarding the priests or medicine-men of different races as Druids, through lack of historic perspective. But one fact shows that they were priests of the Celtic religion in Ireland. The euhemerised Tuatha Dé Danann are masters of Druidic lore. Thus both the gods and the priests who served them were confused by later writers. The opposition of Christian missionaries to the Druids shows that they were priests; if they were not, it remains to be discovered what body of men did exercise priestly functions



in pagan Ireland. In Ireland their judicial functions may have been less important than in Gaul, and they may not have been so strictly organised; but here we are in the region of conjecture. They were exempt from military service in Gaul, and many joined their ranks on this account, but in Ireland they were "bonny fechtors," just as in Gaul they occasionally fought like mediæval bishops.<sup>1015</sup> In both countries they were present on the field of battle to perform the necessary religious or magical rites.

Since the Druids were an organised priesthood, with powers of teaching and of magic implicitly believed in by the folk, possessing the key of the other-world, and dominating the whole field of religion, it is easy to see how much veneration must have been paid them. Connoting this with the influence of the Roman Church in Celtic regions and the power of the Protestant minister in the Highlands and in Wales, some have thought that there is an innate tendency in the Celt to be priest-ridden. If this be true, we can only say, "the people wish to have it so, and the priests—pagan, papist, or protestant—bear rule through their means!"

Thus a close examination of the position and functions of the Druids explains away two popular misconceptions. They were not possessed of any recondite and esoteric wisdom. And the culling of mistletoe instead of being the most important, was but a subordinate part of their functions.

In Gaul the Roman power broke the sway of the Druids, aided perhaps by the spread of Christianity, but it was Christianity alone which routed them in Ireland and in Britain outside the Roman pale. The Druidic organisation, their power in politics and in the administration of justice, their patriotism, and also their use of human sacrifice and magic, were all obnoxious to the Roman Government, which opposed them mainly on political grounds. Magic and human sacrifice were suppressed because they were contrary to Roman manners. The first attack was in the reign of Augustus, who prohibited Roman citizens from taking part in the religion of the Druids.<sup>1016</sup> Tiberius next interdicted the Druids, but this was probably aimed at their human sacrifices, for the Druids were not suppressed, since they existed still in the reign of Claudius, who is said to have abolished *Druidarum religionem dirae immanitatis*.<sup>1017</sup> The earlier legislation was

ineffective; that of Claudius was more thorough, but it, too, was probably aimed mainly at human sacrifice and magic, since Aurelius Victor limits it to the "notorious superstitions" of the Druids.<sup>1018</sup> It did not abolish the native religion, as is proved by the numerous inscriptions to Celtic gods, and by the fact that, as Mela informs us, human victims were still offered symbolically,<sup>1019</sup> while the Druids were still active some years later. A parallel is found in the British abolition of Sati in India, while permitting the native religion to flourish.

Probably more effective was the policy begun by Augustus. Magistrates were inaugurated and acted as judges, thus ousting the Druids, and native deities and native ritual were assimilated to those of Rome. Celtic religion was Romanised, and if the Druids retained priestly functions, it could only be by their becoming Romanised also. Perhaps the new State religion in Gaul simply ignored them. The annual assembly of deputies at Lugudunum round the altar of Rome and Augustus had a religious character, and was intended to rival and to supersede the annual gathering of the Druids.<sup>1020</sup> The deputies elected a flamen of the province who had surveillance of the cult, and there were also flamens for each city. Thus the power of the Druids in politics, law, and religion was quietly undermined, while Rome also struck a blow at their position as teachers by establishing schools throughout Gaul.<sup>1021</sup>

M. D'Arbois maintains that, as a result of persecution, the Druids retired to the depths of the forests, and continued to teach there in secret those who despised the new learning of Rome, basing his opinion on passages of Lucan and Mela, both writing a little after the promulgation of the laws.<sup>1022</sup> But neither Lucan nor Mela refer to an existing state of things, and do not intend their readers to suppose that the Druids fled to woods and caverns. Lucan speaks of them *dwelling* in woods, *i.e.* their sacred groves, and resuming their rites after Cæsar's conquest not after the later edicts, and he does not speak of the Druids teaching there.<sup>1023</sup> Mela seems to be echoing Cæsar's account of the twenty years' novitiate, but adds to it that the teaching was given in secret, confusing it, however, with that given to others than candidates for the priesthood. Thus he says: "Docent multa

nobilissimos gentis clam et diu vicens annis aut in specu aut in abditis saltibus,"<sup>1024</sup> but there is not the slightest evidence that this secrecy was the result of the edicts. Moreover, the attenuated sacrificial rites which he describes were evidently practised quite openly. Probably some Druids continued their teaching in their secret and sacred haunts, but it is unlikely that noble Gauls would resort to them when Greco-Roman culture was now open to them in the schools, where they are found receiving instruction in 21 A.D.<sup>1025</sup> Most of the Druids probably succumbed to the new order of things. Some continued the old rites in a modified manner as long as they could obtain worshippers. Others, more fanatical, would suffer from the law when they could not evade its grasp. Some of these revolted against Rome after Nero's death, and it was perhaps to this class that those Druids belonged who prophesied the world-empire of the Celts in 70 A.D.<sup>1026</sup> The fact that Druids existed at this date shows that the proscription had not been complete. But the complete Romanising of Gaul took away their occupation, though even in the fourth century men still boasted of their Druidic descent.<sup>1027</sup>

The insular Druids opposed the legions in Southern Britain, and in Mona in 62 A.D. they made a last stand with the warriors against the Romans, gesticulating and praying to the gods. But with the establishment of Roman power in Britain their fate must have resembled that of the Druids of Gaul. A recrudescence of Druidism is found, however, in the presence of *magi* (Druids) with Vortigern after the Roman withdrawal.<sup>1028</sup> Outside the Roman pale the Druids were still rampant and practised their rites as before, according to Pliny.<sup>1029</sup> Much later, in the sixth century, they opposed Christian missionaries in Scotland, just as in Ireland they opposed S. Patrick and his monks, who combated "the hard-hearted Druids." Finally, Christianity was victorious and the powers of the Druids passed in large measure to the Christian clergy or remained to some extent with the *Filid*.<sup>1030</sup> In popular belief the clerics had prevailed less by the persuasive power of the gospel, than by successfully rivalling the magic of the Druids.

Classical writers speak of *Dryades* or "Druidesses" in the third century. One of them predicted his approaching death to Alexander Severus, another promised the empire to Diocletian, others were consulted by Aurelian.<sup>1031</sup> Thus they were divineresses, rather than priestesses, and their name may be the result of misconception, unless they assumed it when Druids no longer existed as a class. In Ireland there were divineresses—*ban-filid* or *ban-fáthi*, probably a distinct class with prophetic powers. Kings are warned against "pythonesses" as well as Druids, and Dr. Joyce thinks these were Druidesses.<sup>1032</sup> S. Patrick also armed himself against "the spells of women" and of Druids.<sup>1033</sup> Women in Ireland had a knowledge of futurity, according to Solinus, and the women who took part with the Druids like furies at Mona, may have been divineresses.<sup>1034</sup> In Ireland it is possible that such women were called "Druidesses," since the word *ban-druí* is met with, the women so called being also styled *ban-fili*, while the fact that they belonged to the class of the *Filid* brings them into connection with the Druids.<sup>1035</sup> But *ban-druí* may have been applied to women with priestly functions, such as certainly existed in Ireland—e.g. the virgin guardians of sacred fires, to whose functions Christian nuns succeeded.<sup>1036</sup> We know also that the British queen Boudicca exercised priestly functions, and such priestesses, apart from the *Dryades*, existed among the continental Celts. Inscriptions at Arles speak of an *antistita deae*, and at Le Prugnon of a *flaminica sacerdos* of the goddess Thucolis.<sup>1037</sup> These were servants of a goddess like the priestess of the Celtic Artemis in Galatia, in whose family the priesthood was hereditary.<sup>1038</sup> The virgins called Gallizenæ, who practised divination and magic in the isle of Sena, were priestesses of a Gaulish god, and some of the women who were "possessed by Dionysus" and practised an orgiastic cult on an island in the Loire, were probably of the same kind.<sup>1039</sup> They were priestesses of some magico-religious cult practised by women, like the guardians of the sacred fire in Ireland, which was tabu to men. M. Reinach regards the accounts of these island priestesses as fictions based on the story of Circe's isle, but even if they are garbled, they seem to be based on actual observation and are paralleled from other regions.<sup>1040</sup>

The existence of such priestesses and divineresses over the Celtic area is to be explained by our hypothesis that many Celtic divinities were at first female and served by women, who were possessed of the tribal lore. Later, men assumed their functions, and hence arose the great priesthoods, but conservatism sporadically retained such female cults and priestesses, some goddesses being still served by women—the Galatian Artemis, or the goddesses of Gaul, with their female servants. Time also brought its revenges, for when paganism passed away, much of its folk-ritual and magic remained, practised by wise women or witches, who for generations had as much power over ignorant minds as the Christian priesthood. The fact that Cæsar and Tacitus speak of Germanic but not of Celtic priestesses, can hardly, in face of these scattered notices, be taken as a proof that women had no priestly *rôle* in Celtic religion. If they had not, that religion would be unique in the world's history.

[950.](#) Pliny, *HN* xvi. 249.

[951.](#) D'Arbois, *Les Druides*, 85, following Thurneysen.

[952.](#) D'Arbois, *op. cit.* 12 f.; Deloche, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, xxxiv. 466; Desjardins, *Geog. de la Gaule Romaine*, ii. 518.

[953.](#) Cæsar, vi. 13.

[954.](#) Pliny, *HN* xxx. 1.

[955.](#) Rh<sup>ys</sup>, *CB*<sup>4</sup> 69 f.

[956.](#) Gomme, *Ethnol. in Folk-lore*, 58, *Village Community*, 104.

[957.](#) Sergi, *The Mediterranean Race*, 295.

[958.](#) Reinach, "L'Art plastique en Gaule et le Druidisme," *RC* xiii. 189.

[959.](#) Holmes, *Cæsar's Conquest of Gaul*, 15; Dottin, 270.

[960.](#) Diog. Laert. i. 1; Livy xxiii. 24.

[961.](#) Desjardins, *op. cit.* ii. 519; but cf. Holmes, 535.

[962.](#) *Gutuattros* is perhaps from *gutu-*, "voice" (Holder, i. 2046; but see Loth, *RC* xxviii. 120). The existence of the *gutuatri* is known from a few inscriptions (see Holder), and from Hirtius, *de Bell. Gall.* viii. 38, who mentions a *gutuattros* put to death by Cæsar.

[963.](#) D'Arbois, *Les Druides*, 2 f., *Les Celtes*, 32.

[964.](#) Ausonius, *Professor* v. 7, xi. 24.

- [965.](#) Lucan, iii. 424; Livy, xxiii. 24.
- [966.](#) Diod. Sic. v. 31; Strabo, iv. 4. 4; Timagenes *apud* Amm. Marc. xv. 9.
- [967.](#) Cicero, *de Div.* i. 41. 90; Tac. *Hist.* iv. 54.
- [968.](#) *Phars.* i. 449 f.
- [969.](#) *HN* xxx. i.
- [970.](#) *Filid*, sing. *File*, is from *velo*, "I see" (Stokes, *US* 277).
- [971.](#) *Fáthi* is cognate with *Vates*.
- [972.](#) In Wales there had been Druids as there were Bards, but all trace of the second class is lost. Long after the Druids had passed away, the fiction of the *derwydd-vardd* or Druid-bard was created, and the later bards were held to be depositories of a supposititious Druidic theosophy, while they practised the old rites in secret. The late word *derwydd* was probably invented from *derw*, "oak," by some one who knew Pliny's derivation. See D'Arbois, *Les Druides*, 81.
- [973.](#) For these views see Dottin, 295; Holmes, 17; Bertrand, 192-193, 268-269.
- [974.](#) Diog. Laert. i. proem. 1. For other references see Cæsar, vi. 13, 14; Strabo, iv. 4. 4; Amm. Marc. xv. 9; Diod. Sic. v. 28; Lucan, i. 460; Mela, iii. 2.
- [975.](#) Suet. *Claud.* 25; Mela, iii. 2.
- [976.](#) Pliny, xxx. 1.
- [977.](#) D'Arbois, *Les Druides*, 77.
- [978.](#) Diod. Sic. v. 31. 4.
- [979.](#) See Cicero, *de Div.* i. 41.
- [980.](#) Diod. Sic. v. 28; Amm. Marc. xv. 9; Hippolytus, *Refut. Hær.* i. 22.
- [981.](#) Amm. Marc. xv. 9.
- [982.](#) Cæsar, vi. 14.
- [983.](#) Diog. Laert. 6. Celtic enthusiasts see in this triple maxim something akin to the Welsh triads, which they claim to be Druidic!
- [984.](#) Bertrand, 280.
- [985.](#) Cæsar, vi. 13.
- [986.](#) *Trip. Life*, ii. 325, i. 52, ii. 402; *IT* i. 373; *RC* xxvi. 33. The title *rig-file*, "king poet," sometimes occurs.
- [987.](#) Cæsar, vi. 14.
- [988.](#) Cæsar, vi. 13; Strabo, iv. 4. 4.
- [989.](#) Strabo, xii. 5. 2.
- [990.](#) Their judicial powers were taken from them because their speech had become obscure. Perhaps they gave their judgments in archaic language.

- [991.](#) Diod. Sic. v. 31. 5.
- [992.](#) Cæsar, vii. 33.
- [993.](#) *IT* i. 213; D'Arbois, v. 186.
- [994.](#) Dio, *Orat.* xlix.
- [995.](#) *LL* 93.
- [996.](#) *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, i. 22.
- [997.](#) Cæsar, vi. 13, 14; Windisch, *Táin*, line 1070 f.; *IT* i. 325; *Arch. Rev.* i. 74; *Trip. Life*, 99; cf. O'Curry, *MC* ii. 201.
- [998.](#) Cæsar, vi. 14; Strabo, iv. 4. 4.
- [999.](#) *Trip. Life*, 284.
- [1000.](#) Lucan, i. 451.
- [1001.](#) Diod. v. 31. 4; cf. Cæsar, vi. 13, 16; Strabo, iv. 4. 5.
- [1002.](#) See p. 248, *supra*.
- [1003.](#) *RC* xiv. 29; Miss Hull, 4, 23, 141; *IT* iii. 392, 423; Stokes, *Félire*, Intro. 23.
- [1004.](#) Loth, i. 56.
- [1005.](#) See my art. "Baptism (Ethnic)" in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ii. 367 f.
- [1006.](#) Carmichael, *Carm. Gadel.* i. 115.
- [1007.](#) See p. 206, *supra*.
- [1008.](#) *IT* i. 215.
- [1009.](#) O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 221, 641.
- [1010.](#) *RC* xvi. 34.
- [1011.](#) Pliny, *HN* xvi. 45; *Trip. Life*, ii. 325; Strabo, iv. 275.
- [1012.](#) *RC* xxii. 285; O'Curry, *MC* ii. 215.
- [1013.](#) Reeves' ed. of Adamnan's *Life of S. Col.* 237; Todd, *S. Patrick*, 455; Joyce, *SH* i. 234. For the relation of the Druidic tonsure to the peculiar tonsure of the Celtic Church, see Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 213, *CB*<sup>4</sup> 72; Gougaud, *Les Chrétientés Celtiques*, 198.
- [1014.](#) See Hyde, *Lit. Hist. of Ireland*, 88; Joyce, *SH* i. 239.
- [1015.](#) Cæsar, vi. 14, ii. 10.
- [1016.](#) Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.
- [1017.](#) Pliny *HN* xxx. 1; Suet. *Claud.* 25.
- [1018.](#) *de Cæsaribus*, 4, "famosæ superstitiones"; cf. p. 328, *infra*.
- [1019.](#) Mela, iii. 2.
- [1020.](#) Mommsen, *Rom. Gesch.* v. 94.



- [1021.](#) Bloch (Lavissee), *Hist. de France*, i. 2, 176 f., 391 f.; Duruy, "Comment p rit l'institution Druidique," *Rev. Arch.* xv. 347; de Coulanges, "Comment le Druidisme a disparu," *RC* iv. 44.
- [1022.](#) *Les Druides*, 73.
- [1023.](#) *Phars.* i. 453, "Ye Druids, after arms were laid aside, sought once again your barbarous ceremonials.... In remote forests do ye inhabit the deep glades."
- [1024.](#) Mela, iii. 2.
- [1025.](#) Tacit. iii. 43.
- [1026.](#) *Ibid.* iv. 54.
- [1027.](#) Ausonius, *Prof.* v. 12, xi. 17.
- [1028.](#) Nennius, 40. In the Irish version they are called "Druids." See p. 238, *supra*.
- [1029.](#) Pliny, xxx. 1.
- [1030.](#) Adamnan, *Vita S. Col.*, i. 37. ii. 35, etc.; Reeves' *Adamnan*, 247 f.; Stokes, *Three Homilies*, 24 f.; *Antient Laws of Ireland*, i. 15; *RC* xvii. 142 f.; *IT* i. 23.
- [1031.](#) Lampridius, *Alex. Sev.* 60; Vopiscus, *Numerienus*, 14, *Aurelianus*, 44.
- [1032.](#) Windisch, *T in*, 31, 221; cf. Meyer, *Contributions to Irish Lexicog.* 176 Joyce, *SH* i. 238.
- [1033.](#) *IT* i. 56.
- [1034.](#) Solinus, 35; Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 30.
- [1035.](#) *RC* xv. 326, xvi. 34, 277; Windisch, *T in*, 331. In *LL 75b* we hear of "three Druids and three Druidesses."
- [1036.](#) See p. 69, *supra*; Keating, 331.
- [1037.](#) Jullian, 100; Holder, s.v. "Thucolis."
- [1038.](#) Plutarch, *Vir. mul.* 20.
- [1039.](#) Mela, iii. 6; Strabo, iv. 4. 6.
- [1040.](#) Reinach, *RC* xviii. 1 f. The fact that the rites were called Dionysiac is no reason for denying the fact that some orgiastic rites were practised. Classical writers usually reported all barbaric rites in terms of their own religion. M. D'Arbois (vi. 325) points out that Circe was not a virgin, and had not eight companions.



# Magic

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The Celts, like all other races, were devoted to magical practices, many of which could be used by any one, though, on the whole, they were in the hands of the Druids, who in many aspects were little higher than the shamans of barbaric tribes. But similar magical rites were also attributed to the gods, and it is probably for this reason that the Tuatha Dé Danann and many of the divinities who appear in the *Mabinogion* are described as magicians. Kings are also spoken of as wizards, perhaps a reminiscence of the powers of the priest king. But since many of the primitive cults had been in the hands of women, and as these cults implied a large use of magic, they may have been the earliest wielders of magic, though, with increasing civilisation, men took their place as magicians. Still side by side with the magic-wielding Druids, there were classes of women who also dealt in magic, as we have seen. Their powers were feared, even by S. Patrick, who classes the "spells of women" along with those of Druids, and, in a mythic tale, by the father of Connla, who, when the youth was fascinated by a goddess, feared that he would be taken by the "spells of women" (*brichta ban*).<sup>[1041](#)</sup> In other tales women perform all such magical actions as are elsewhere ascribed to Druids.<sup>[1042](#)</sup> And after the Druids had passed away precisely similar actions—power over the weather, the use of incantations and amulets, shape-shifting and invisibility, etc.—were, and still are in remote Celtic regions, ascribed to witches. Much of the Druidic art, however, was also supposed to be possessed by saints and clerics, both in the past and in recent times. But women remained as magicians when the Druids had disappeared, partly because of female conservatism, partly because, even in pagan times, they had worked more or less secretly. At last the Church proscribed them and persecuted them.

Each clan, tribe, or kingdom had its Druids, who, in time of war, assisted their hosts by magic art. This is reflected back upon the groups of the mythological cycle, each of which has its Druids who play no small part

in the battles fought. Though Pliny recognises the priestly functions of the Druids, he associates them largely with magic, and applies the name *magus* to them.<sup>1043</sup> In Irish ecclesiastical literature, *druí* is used as the translation of *magus*, e.g. in the case of the Egyptian magicians, while *magi* is used in Latin lives of saints as the equivalent of the vernacular *druides*.<sup>1044</sup> In the sagas and in popular tales *Druidecht*, "Druidism," stands for "magic," and *slat an draoichta*, "rod of Druidism," is a magic wand.<sup>1045</sup> The Tuatha Dé Danann were said to have learned "Druidism" from the four great master Druids of the region whence they had come to Ireland, and even now, in popular tales, they are often called "Druids" or "Danann Druids."<sup>1046</sup> Thus in Ireland at least there is clear evidence of the great magical power claimed by Druids.

That power was exercised to a great extent over the elements, some of which Druids claimed to have created. Thus the Druid Cathbad covered the plain over which Deirdre was escaping with "a great-waved sea."<sup>1047</sup> Druids also produced blinding snow-storms, or changed day into night—feats ascribed to them even in the Lives of Saints.<sup>1048</sup> Or they discharge "shower-clouds of fire" on the opposing hosts, as in the case of the Druid Mag Ruith, who made a magic fire, and flying upwards towards it, turned it upon the enemy, whose Druid in vain tried to divert it.<sup>1049</sup> When the Druids of Cormac dried up all the waters in the land, another Druid shot an arrow, and where it fell there issued a torrent of water.<sup>1050</sup> The Druid Mathgen boasted of being able to throw mountains on the enemy, and frequently Druids made trees or stones appear as armed men, dismaying the opposing host in this way. They could also fill the air with the clash of battle, or with the dread cries of eldritch things.<sup>1051</sup> Similar powers are ascribed to other persons. The daughters of Calatin raised themselves aloft on an enchanted wind, and discovered Cúchulainn when he was hidden away by Cathbad. Later they produced a magic mist to discomfit the hero.<sup>1052</sup> Such mists occur frequently in the sagas, and in one of them the Tuatha Dé Danann arrived in Ireland. The priestesses of Sena could rouse sea and wind by their enchantments, and, later, Celtic witches have claimed the same power.

In folk-survivals the practice of rain-making is connected with sacred springs, and even now in rural France processions to shrines, usually connected with a holy well, are common in time of drought. Thus people and priest go to the fountain of Baranton in procession, singing hymns, and there pray for rain. The priest then dips his foot in the water, or throws some of it on the rocks.<sup>[1053](#)</sup> In other cases the image of a saint is carried to a well and asperged, as divine images formerly were, or the waters are beaten or thrown into the air.<sup>[1054](#)</sup> Another custom was that a virgin should clean out a sacred well, and formerly she had to be nude.<sup>[1055](#)</sup> Nudity also forms part of an old ritual used in Gaul. In time of drought the girls of the village followed the youngest virgin in a state of nudity to seek the herb *belinuntia*. This she uprooted, and was then led to a river and there asperged by the others. In this case the asperging imitated the falling rain, and was meant to produce it automatically. While some of these rites suggest the use of magic by the folk themselves, in others the presence of the Christian priest points to the fact that, formerly, a Druid was necessary as the rain producer. In some cases the priest has inherited through long ages the rain-making or tempest-quelling powers of the pagan priesthood, and is often besought to exercise them.<sup>[1056](#)</sup>

Causing invisibility by means of a spell called *feth fiada*, which made a person unseen or hid him in a magic mist, was also used by the Druids as well as by Christian saints. S. Patrick's hymn, called *Fâed Fiada*, was sung by him when his enemies lay in wait, and caused a glamour in them. The incantation itself, *fith-fath*, is still remembered in Highland glens.<sup>[1057](#)</sup> In the case of S. Patrick he and his followers appeared as deer, and this power of shape-shifting was wielded both by Druids and women. The Druid Fer Fidail carried off a maiden by taking the form of a woman, and another Druid deceived Cúchulainn by taking the form of the fair Niamh.<sup>[1058](#)</sup> Other Druids are said to have been able to take any shape that pleased them.<sup>[1059](#)</sup> These powers were reflected back upon the gods and mythical personages like Taliesin or Amairgen, who appear in many forms. The priestesses of Sena could assume the form of animals, and an Irish Circe in the *Rennes*

*Dindsenchas* called Dalb the Rough changed three men and their wives into swine by her spells.<sup>1060</sup> This power of transforming others is often described in the sagas. The children of Lir were changed to swans by their cruel stepmother; Saar, the mother of Oisín, became a fawn through the power of the Druid Fear Doirche when she rejected his love; and similarly Tuirrenn, mother of Oisín's hounds, was transformed into a stag-hound by the fairy mistress of her husband Iollann.<sup>1061</sup> In other instances in the sagas, women appear as birds.<sup>1062</sup> These transformation tales may be connected with totemism, for when this institution is decaying the current belief in shape-shifting is often made use of to explain descent from animals or the tabu against eating certain animals. In some of these Irish shape-shifting tales we find this tabu referred to. Thus, when the children of Lir were turned into swans, it was proclaimed that no one should kill a swan. The reason of an existing tabu seemed to be sufficiently explained when it was told that certain human beings had become swans. It is not impossible that the Druids made use of hypnotic suggestion to persuade others that they had assumed another form, as Red Indian shamans have been known to do, or even hallucinated others into the belief that their own form had been changed.

By a "drink of oblivion" Druids and other persons could make one forget even the most dearly beloved. Thus Cúchulainn was made to forget Fand, and his wife Emer to forget her jealousy.<sup>1063</sup> This is a reminiscence of potent drinks brewed from herbs which caused hallucinations, *e.g.* that of the change of shape. In other cases they were of a narcotic nature and caused a deep sleep, an instance being the draught given by Grainne to Fionn and his men.<sup>1064</sup> Again, the "Druidic sleep" is suggestive of hypnotism, practised in distant ages and also by present-day savages. When Bodb suspected his daughter of lying he cast her into a "Druidic sleep," in which she revealed her wickedness.<sup>1065</sup> In other cases spells are cast upon persons so that they are hallucinated, or are rendered motionless, or, "by the sleight of hand of soothsayers," maidens lose their chastity without knowing it.<sup>1066</sup> These point to knowledge of hypnotic methods of

suggestion. Or, again, a spectral army is opposed to an enemy's force to whom it is an hallucinatory appearance—perhaps an exaggeration of natural hypnotic powers.<sup>[1067](#)</sup>

Druids also made a "hedge," the *airbe druad*, round an army, perhaps circumambulating it and saying spells so that the attacking force might not break through. If any one could leap this "hedge," the spell was broken, but he lost his life. This was done at the battle of Cul Dremne, at which S. Columba was present and aided the heroic leaper with his prayers.<sup>[1068](#)</sup>

A primitive piece of sympathetic magic used still by savages is recorded in the *Rennes Dindsenchas*. In this story one man says spells over his spear and hurls it into his opponent's shadow, so that he falls dead.<sup>[1069](#)</sup> Equally primitive is the Druidic "sending" a wisp of straw over which the Druid sang spells and flung it into his victim's face, so that he became mad. A similar method is used by the Eskimo *angedkok*. All madness was generally ascribed to such a "sending."

Several of these instances have shown the use of spells, and the Druid was believed to possess powerful incantations to discomfit an enemy or to produce other magical results. A special posture was adopted—standing on one leg, with one arm outstretched and one eye closed, perhaps to concentrate the force of the spell,<sup>[1070](#)</sup> but the power lay mainly in the spoken words, as we have seen in discussing Celtic formulæ of prayer. Such spells were also used by the *Filid*, or poets, since most primitive poetry has a magical aspect. Part of the training of the bard consisted in learning traditional incantations, which, used with due ritual, produced the magic result.<sup>[1071](#)</sup> Some of these incantations have already come before our notice, and probably some of the verses which Cæsar says the Druids would not commit to writing were of the nature of spells.<sup>[1072](#)</sup> The virtue of the spell lay in the spoken formula, usually introducing the name of a god or spirit, later a saint, in order to procure his intervention, through the power inherent in the name. Other charms recount an effect already produced, and this, through mimetic magic, is supposed to cause its repetition. The earliest written documents bearing upon the paganism of the insular Celts contain an appeal to "the science of Goibniu" to preserve butter, and another, for

magical healing, runs, "I admire the healing which Diancecht left in his family, in order to bring health to those he succoured." These are found in an eighth or ninth century MS., and, with their appeal to pagan gods, were evidently used in Christian times.<sup>[1073](#)</sup> Most Druidic magic was accompanied by a spell—transformation, invisibility, power over the elements, and the discovery of hidden persons or things. In other cases spells were used in medicine or for healing wounds. Thus the Tuatha Dé Danann told the Fomorians that they need not oppose them, because their Druids would restore the slain to life, and when Cúchulainn was wounded we hear less of medicines than of incantations used to stanch his blood.<sup>[1074](#)</sup> In other cases the Druid could remove barrenness by spells.

The survival of the belief in spells among modern Celtic peoples is a convincing proof of their use in pagan times, and throws light upon their nature. In Brittany they are handed down in certain families, and are carefully guarded from the knowledge of others. The names of saints instead of the old gods are found in them, but in some cases diseases are addressed as personal beings. In the Highlands similar charms are found, and are often handed down from male to female, and from female to male. They are also in common use in Ireland. Besides healing diseases, such charms are supposed to cause fertility or bring good luck, or even to transfer the property of others to the reciter, or, in the case of darker magic, to cause death or disease.<sup>[1075](#)</sup> In Ireland, sorcerers could "rime either a man or beast to death," and this recalls the power of satire in the mouth of *File* or Druid. It raised blotches on the face of the victim, or even caused his death.<sup>[1076](#)</sup> Among primitive races powerful internal emotion affects the body in curious ways, and in this traditional power of the satire or "rime" we have probably an exaggerated reference to actual fact. In other cases the "curse of satire" affected nature, causing seas and rivers to sink back.<sup>[1077](#)</sup> The satires made by the bards of Gaul, referred to by Diodorus, may have been believed to possess similar powers.<sup>[1078](#)</sup> Contrariwise, the *Filid*, on uttering an unjust judgment, found their faces covered with blotches.<sup>[1079](#)</sup>



A magical sleep is often caused by music in the sagas, *e.g.* by the harp of Dagda, or by the branch carried by visitants from Elysium.<sup>[1080](#)</sup> Many "fairy" lullabies for producing sleep are even now extant in Ireland and the Highlands.<sup>[1081](#)</sup> As music forms a part of all primitive religion, its soothing powers would easily be magnified. In orgiastic rites it caused varying emotions until the singer and dancer fell into a deep slumber, and the tales of those who joined in a fairy dance and fell asleep, awaking to find that many years had passed, are mythic extensions of the power of music in such orgiastic cults. The music of the *Filid* had similar powers to that of Dagda's harp, producing laughter, tears, and a delicious slumber,<sup>[1082](#)</sup> and Celtic folk-tales abound in similar instances of the magic charm of music.

We now turn to the use of amulets among the Celts. Some of these were symbolic and intended to bring the wearer under the protection of the god whom they symbolised. As has been seen, a Celtic god had as his symbol a wheel, probably representing the sun, and numerous small wheel discs made of different materials have been found in Gaul and Britain.<sup>[1083](#)</sup> These were evidently worn as amulets, while in other cases they were offered to river divinities, since many are met with in river beds or fords. Their use as protective amulets is shown by a stele representing a person wearing a necklace to which is attached one of these wheels. In Irish texts a Druid is called Mag Ruith, explained as *magus rotarum*, because he made his Druidical observations by wheels.<sup>[1084](#)</sup> This may point to the use of such amulets in Ireland. A curious amulet, connected with the Druids, became famous in Roman times and is described by Pliny. This was the "serpents' egg," formed from the foam produced by serpents twining themselves together. The serpents threw the "egg" into the air, and he who sought it had to catch it in his cloak before it fell, and flee to a running stream, beyond which the serpents, like the witches pursuing Tam o' Shanter, could not follow him. This "egg" was believed to cause its owner to obtain access to kings or to gain lawsuits, and a Roman citizen was put to death in the reign of Claudius for bringing such an amulet into court. Pliny had seen this "egg." It was about the size of an apple, with a cartilaginous skin covered with discs.<sup>[1085](#)</sup> Probably it was a fossil echinus, such as has been found in

Gaulish tombs.<sup>1086</sup> Such "eggs" were doubtless connected with the cult of the serpent, or some old myth of an egg produced by serpents may have been made use of to account for their formation. This is the more likely, as rings or beads of glass found in tumuli in Wales, Cornwall, and the Highlands are called "serpents' glass" (*glain naidr*), and are believed to be formed in the same way as the "egg." These, as well as old spindle-whorls called "adder stones" in the Highlands, are held to have magical virtues, *e.g.* against the bite of a serpent, and are highly prized by their owners.<sup>1087</sup>

Pliny speaks also of the Celtic belief in the magical virtues of coral, either worn as an amulet or taken in powder as a medicine, while it has been proved that the Celts during a limited period of their history placed it on weapons and utensils, doubtless as an amulet.<sup>1088</sup> Other amulets—white marble balls, quartz pebbles, models of the tooth of the boar, or pieces of amber, have been found buried with the dead.<sup>1089</sup> Little figures of the boar, the horse, and the bull, with a ring for suspending them to a necklet, were worn as amulets or images of these divine animals, and phallic amulets were also worn, perhaps as a protection against the evil eye.<sup>1090</sup>

A cult of stones was probably connected with the belief in the magical power of certain stones, like the *Lia Fail*, which shrieked aloud when Conn knocked against it. His Druids explained that the number of the shrieks equalled the number of his descendants who should be kings of Erin.<sup>1091</sup> This is an ætiological myth accounting for the use of this fetich-stone at coronations. Other stones, probably the object of a cult or possessing magical virtues, were used at the installation of chiefs, who stood on them and vowed to follow in the steps of their predecessors, a pair of feet being carved on the stone to represent those of the first chief.<sup>1092</sup> Other stones had more musical virtues—the "conspicuous stone" of Elysium from which arose a hundred strains, and the melodious stone of Loch Láig. Such beliefs existed into Christian times. S. Columba's stone altar floated on the waves, and on it a leper had crossed in the wake of the saint's coracle to Erin. But the same stone was that on which, long before, the hero Fionn had slipped.<sup>1093</sup>



Connected with the cult of stones are magical observances at fixed rocks or boulders, regarded probably as the abode of a spirit. These observances are in origin pre-Celtic, but were practised by the Celts. Girls slide down a stone to obtain a lover, pregnant women to obtain an easy delivery, or contact with such stones causes barren women to have children or gives vitality to the feeble. A small offering is usually left on the stone.<sup>1094</sup> Similar rites are practised at megalithic monuments, and here again the custom is obviously pre-Celtic in origin. In this case the spirits of the dead must have been expected to assist the purposes of the rites, or even to incarnate themselves in the children born as a result of barren women resorting to these stones.<sup>1095</sup> Sometimes when the purpose of the stones has been forgotten and some other legendary origin attributed to them, the custom adapts itself to the legend. In Ireland many dolmens are known, not as places of sepulture, but as "Diarmaid and Grainne's beds"—the places where these eloping lovers slept. Hence they have powers of fruitfulness and are visited by women who desire children. The rite is thus one of sympathetic magic.

Holed dolmens or naturally pierced blocks are used for the magical cure of sickness both in Brittany and Cornwall, the patient being passed through the hole.<sup>1096</sup> Similar rites are used with trees, a slit being often made in the trunk of a sapling, and a sickly child passed through it. The slit is then closed and bound, and if it joins together at the end of a certain time, this is a proof that the child will recover.<sup>1097</sup> In these rites the spirit in stone or tree was supposed to assist the process of healing, or the disease was transferred to them, or, again, there was the idea of a new birth with consequent renewed life, the act imitating the process of birth. These rites are not confined to Celtic regions, but belong to that universal use of magic in which the Celts freely participated.

Since Christian writers firmly believed in the magical powers of the Druids, aided however by the devil, they taught that Christian saints had miraculously overcome them with their own weapons. S. Patrick dispelled snow-storms and darkness raised by Druids, or destroyed Druids who had brought down fire from heaven. Similar deeds are attributed to S. Columba

and others.<sup>1098</sup> The moral victory of the Cross was later regarded also as a magical victory. Hence also lives of Celtic saints are full of miracles which are simply a reproduction of Druidic magic—controlling the elements, healing, carrying live coals without hurt, causing confusion by their curses, producing invisibility or shape-shifting, making the ice-cold waters of a river hot by standing in them at their devotions, or walking unscathed through the fiercest storms.<sup>1099</sup> They were soon regarded as more expert magicians than the Druids themselves. They may have laid claim to magical powers, or perhaps they used a natural shrewdness in such a way as to suggest magic. But all their power they ascribed to Christ. "Christ is my Druid"—the true miracle-worker, said S. Columba. Yet they were imbued with the superstitions of their own age. Thus S. Columba sent a white stone to King Brude at Inverness for the cure of his Druid Broichan, who drank the water poured over it, and was healed.<sup>1100</sup> Soon similar virtues were ascribed to the relics of the saints themselves, and at a later time, when most Scotsmen ceased to believe in the saints, they thought that the ministers of the kirk had powers like those of pagan Druid and Catholic saint. Ministers were levitated, or shone with a celestial light, or had clairvoyant gifts, or, with dire results, cursed the ungodly or the benighted prelatist. They prophesied, used trance-utterance, and exercised gifts of healing. Angels ministered to them, as when Samuel Rutherford, having fallen into a well when a child, was pulled out by an angel.<sup>1101</sup> The substratum of primitive belief survives all changes of creed, and the folk impartially attributed magical powers to pagan Druid, Celtic saints, old crones and witches, and Presbyterian ministers.

<sup>1041</sup>. *IT* i. 56; D'Arbois, v. 387.

<sup>1042</sup>. See, e.g., "The Death of Muirchertach," *RC* xxiii. 394.

<sup>1043</sup>. *HN* xxx. 4, 13.

<sup>1044</sup>. Zimmer, *Gloss. Hibern.* 183; Reeves, *Adamnan*, 260.

<sup>1045</sup>. Kennedy, 175; cf. *IT* i. 220.

<sup>1046</sup>. See *RC* xii. 52 f.; D'Arbois, v. 403-404; O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 505; Kennedy, 75, 196, 258.

- [1047.](#) D'Arbois, v. 277.
- [1048.](#) Stokes, *Three Middle Irish Homilies*, 24; *IT* iii. 325.
- [1049.](#) *RC* xii. 83; Miss Hull, 215; D'Arbois, v. 424; O'Curry, *MC* ii. 215.
- [1050.](#) Keating, 341; O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 271.
- [1051.](#) *RC* xii. 81.
- [1052.](#) Miss Hull, 240 f.
- [1053.](#) Maury, 14.
- [1054.](#) Sébillot, ii. 226 f., i. 101, ii. 225; Béranger-Féraud, *Superstitions et Survivances*, iii. 169 f.; *Stat. Account*, viii. 52.
- [1055.](#) *Rev. des Trad.* 1893, 613; Sébillot, ii. 224.
- [1056.](#) Béranger-Féraud, iii. 218 f.; Sébillot, i. 100, 109; *RC* ii. 484; Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup>, i. 67.
- [1057.](#) D'Arbois, v. 387; *IT* i. 52; Dixon, *Gairloch*, 165; Carmichael, *Carm. Gad.* ii. 25.
- [1058.](#) *RC* xvi. 152; Miss Hull, 243.
- [1059.](#) D'Arbois, v. 133; *IT* ii. 373.
- [1060.](#) Mela, iii. 6; *RC* xv. 471.
- [1061.](#) Joyce, *OCR* 1 f.; Kennedy, 235.
- [1062.](#) Bird-women pursued by Cúchulainn; D'Arbois, v. 178; for other instances see O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 426; Miss Hull, 82.
- [1063.](#) D'Arbois, v. 215.
- [1064.](#) Joyce, *OCR* 279.
- [1065.](#) *Ibid.* 86.
- [1066.](#) *RC* xxiii. 394; Jocelyn, *Vita S. Kent.* c. 1.
- [1067.](#) *RC* xv. 446.
- [1068.](#) O'Connor, *Rer. Hib. Scrip.* ii. 142; Stokes, *Lives of Saints*, xxviii.
- [1069.](#) *RC* xv. 444.
- [1070.](#) See p. 251, *supra*.
- [1071.](#) O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 240.
- [1072.](#) See pp. 248, 304, *supra*; Cæsar, *vi.* 14.
- [1073.](#) Zimmer, *Gloss. Hiber.* 271. Other Irish incantations, appealing to the saints, are found in the *Codex Regularum* at Klosterneburg (*RC* ii. 112).
- [1074.](#) Leahy, i. 137; Kennedy, 301.
- [1075.](#) Sauv  , *RC* vi. 67 f.; Carmichael, *Carm. Gadel.*, *passim*; *CM* xii. 38; Joyce, *SH* i. 629 f.; Camden, *Britannia*, iv. 488; Scot, *Discovery of Witchcraft*, iii. 15.

- [1076.](#) For examples see O'Curry, *MS. Met.* 248; D'Arbois, ii. 190; *RC* xii. 71, xxiv. 279; Stokes, *TIG* xxxvi. f.
- [1077.](#) Windisch, *Táin*, line 3467.
- [1078.](#) Diod. Sic. v. 31.
- [1079.](#) D'Arbois, i. 271.
- [1080.](#) *RC* xii. 109; Nutt-Meyer, i. 2; D'Arbois, v. 445.
- [1081.](#) Petrie, *Ancient Music of Ireland*, i. 73; *The Gael*, i. 235 (fairy lullaby of MacLeod of MacLeod).
- [1082.](#) O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 255.
- [1083.](#) *Archæologia*, xxxix. 509; *Proc. Soc. Ant.* iii. 92; Gaidoz, *Le Dieu Gaul. du Soleil*, 60 f.
- [1084.](#) *IT* iii. 409; but see Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 215.
- [1085.](#) Pliny, *HN* xxix. 3. 54.
- [1086.](#) *Rev. Arch.* i. 227, xxxiii. 283.
- [1087.](#) Hoare, *Modern Wiltshire*, 56; Camden, *Britannia*, 815; Hazlitt, 194; Campbell, *Witchcraft*, 84.  
In the Highlands spindle-whorls are thought to have been perforated by the adder, which then passes through the hole to rid itself of its old skin.
- [1088.](#) Pliny, xxxii. 2. 24; Reinach, *RC* xx. 13 f.
- [1089.](#) *Rev. Arch.* i. 227; Greenwell, *British Barrows*, 165; Elton, 66; Renel, 95f., 194f.
- [1090.](#) Reinach, *BF* 286, 289, 362.
- [1091.](#) O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 387. See a paper by Hartland, "The Voice of the Stone of Destiny," *Folklore Journal*, xiv. 1903.
- [1092.](#) Petrie, *Trans. Royal Irish Acad.* xviii. pt. 2.
- [1093.](#) O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 393 f.
- [1094.](#) Sébillot, i. 334 f.
- [1095.](#) Trollope, *Brittany*, ii. 229; Bérenger-Féraud, *Superstitions et Survivances*, i. 529 f.; Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, iii. 580, 689, 841 f.
- [1096.](#) *Rev. des Trad.* 1894, 494; Bérenger-Féraud, i. 529, ii. 367; Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, 70.
- [1097.](#) Bérenger-Féraud, i. 523; Elworthy, 69, 106; Reinach, *L'Anthropologie*, iv. 33.
- [1098.](#) Kennedy, 324; Adamnan, *Vita S. Col.* ii. 35.
- [1099.](#) Life of S. Fechin of Fore, *RC* xii. 333; Life of S. Kieran, O'Grady, ii. 13; Amra Cholumbchille, *RC* xx. 41; Life of S. Moling, *RC* xxvii. 293; and other lives *passim*. See also Plummer, *Vitæ Sanctorum Hiberniæ*.
- [1100.](#) Adamnan, ii. 34. This pebble was long preserved, but mysteriously disappeared when the person who sought it was doomed to die.

[1101](#). Wodrow, *Analecta*, *passim*; Walker, *Six Saints of the Covenant*, ed. by Dr. Hay Fleming.

# The State of the Dead

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Among all the problems with which man has busied himself, none so appeals to his hopes and fears as that of the future life. Is there a farther shore, and if so, shall we reach it? Few races, if any, have doubted the existence of a future state, but their conceptions of it have differed greatly. But of all the races of antiquity, outside Egypt, the Celts seem to have cherished the most ardent belief in the world beyond the grave, and to have been preoccupied with its joys. Their belief, so far as we know it, was extremely vivid, and its chief characteristic was life in the body after death, in another region.<sup>[1102](#)</sup> This, coupled with the fact that it was taught as a doctrine by the Druids, made it the admiration of classical onlookers. But besides this belief there was another, derived from the ideas of a distant past, that the dead lived on in the grave—the two conceptions being connected. And there may also have been a certain degree of belief in transmigration. Although the Celts believed that the soul could exist apart from the body, there seems to be no evidence that they believed in a future existence of the soul as a shade. This belief is certainly found in some late Welsh poems, where the ghosts are described as wandering in the Caledonian forest, but these can hardly be made use of as evidence for the old pagan doctrine. The evidence for the latter may be gathered from classical observers, from archæology and from Irish texts.

Cæsar writes: "The Druids in particular wish to impress this on them that souls do not perish, but pass from one to another (*ab aliis ... ad alios*) after death, and by this chiefly they think to incite men to valour, the fear of death being overlooked." Later he adds, that at funerals all things which had been dear to the dead man, even living creatures, were thrown on the funeral pyre, and shortly before his time slaves and beloved clients were also consumed.<sup>[1103](#)</sup> Diodorus says: "Among them the doctrine of Pythagoras prevailed that the souls of men were immortal, and after completing their term of existence they live again, the soul passing into

another body. Hence at the burial of the dead some threw letters addressed to dead relatives on the funeral pile, believing that the dead would read them in the next world."<sup>1104</sup> Valerius Maximus writes: "They would fain make us believe that the souls of men are immortal. I would be tempted to call these breeches-wearing folk fools, if their doctrine were not the same as that of the mantle-clad Pythagoras." He also speaks of money lent which would be repaid in the next world, because men's souls are immortal.<sup>1105</sup> These passages are generally taken to mean that the Celts believed simply in transmigration of the Pythagorean type. Possibly all these writers cite one common original, but Cæsar makes no reference to Pythagoras. A comparison with the Pythagorean doctrine shows that the Celtic belief differed materially from it. According to the former, men's souls entered new bodies, even those of animals, in this world, and as an expiation. There is nothing of this in the Celtic doctrine. The new body is not a prison-house of the soul in which it must expiate its former sins, and the soul receives it not in this world but in another. The real point of connection was the insistence of both upon immortality, the Druids teaching that it was bodily immortality. Their doctrine no more taught transmigration than does the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. Roman writers, aware that Pythagoras taught immortality *via* a series of transmigrations, and that the Druids taught a doctrine of bodily immortality, may have thought that the receiving of a new body meant transmigration. Themselves sceptical of a future life or believing in a traditional gloomy Hades, they were bound to be struck with the vigour of the Celtic doctrine and its effects upon conduct. The only thing like it of which they knew was the Pythagorean doctrine. Looked at in this light, Cæsar's words need not convey the idea of transmigration, and it is possible that he mistranslated some Greek original. Had these writers meant that the Druids taught transmigration, they could hardly have added the passages regarding debts being paid in the other world, or letters conveyed there by the dead, or human sacrifices to benefit the dead there. These also preclude the idea of a mere immortality of the soul. The dead Celt continued to be the person he had been, and it may have been that not a new body, but the old body glorified, was tenanted by his soul beyond the

grave. This bodily immortality in a region where life went on as on this earth, but under happier conditions, would then be like the Vedic teaching that the soul, after the burning of the body, went to the heaven of Yama, and there received its body complete and glorified. The two conceptions, Hindu and Celtic, may have sprung from early "Aryan" belief.

This Celtic doctrine appears more clearly from what Lucan says of the Druidic teaching. "From you we learn that the bourne of man's existence is not the silent halls of Erebus, in another world (or region, *in orbe alio*) the spirit animates the members. Death, if your lore be true, is but the centre of a long life." For this reason, he adds, the Celtic warrior had no fear of death.<sup>[1106](#)</sup> Thus Lucan conceived the Druidic doctrine to be one of bodily immortality in another region. That region was not a gloomy state; rather it resembled the Egyptian Aalu with its rich and varied existence. Classical writers, of course, may have known of what appears to have been a sporadic Celtic idea, derived from old beliefs, that the soul might take the form of an animal, but this was not the Druidic teaching. Again, if the Gauls, like the Irish, had myths telling of the rebirth of gods or semi-divine beings, these may have been misinterpreted by those writers and regarded as eschatological. But such myths do not concern mortals. Other writers, Timagenes, Strabo, and Mela,<sup>[1107](#)</sup> speak only of the immortality of the soul, but their testimony is probably not at variance with that of Lucan, since Mela appears to copy Cæsar, and speaks of accounts and debts being passed on to the next world.

This theory of a bodily immortality is supported by the Irish sagas, in which ghosts, in our sense of the word, do not exist. The dead who return are not spectres, but are fully clothed upon with a body. Thus, when Cúchulainn returns at the command of S. Patrick, he is described exactly as if he were still in the flesh. "His hair was thick and black ... in his head his eye gleamed swift and grey.... Blacker than the side of a cooking spit each of his two brows, redder than ruby his lips." His clothes and weapons are fully described, while his chariot and horses are equally corporeal.<sup>[1108](#)</sup> Similar descriptions of the dead who return are not infrequent, *e.g.* that of Caoilte in the story of Mongan, whom every one believes to be a living



warrior, and that of Fergus mac Roich, who reappeared in a beautiful form, adorned with brown hair and clad in his former splendour, and recited the lost story of the *Táin*.<sup>1109</sup> Thus the Irish Celts believed that in another world the spirit animated the members. This bodily existence is also suggested in Celtic versions of the "Dead Debtor" folk-tale cycle. Generally an animal in whose shape a dead man helps his benefactor is found in other European versions, but in the Celtic stories not an animal but the dead man himself appears as a living person in corporeal form.<sup>1110</sup> Equally substantial and corporeal, eating, drinking, lovemaking, and fighting are the divine folk of the *síd* or of Elysium, or the gods as they are represented in the texts. To the Celts, gods, *síde*, and the dead, all alike had a bodily form, which, however, might become invisible, and in other ways differed from the earthly body.

The archæological evidence of burial customs among the Celts also bears witness to this belief. Over the whole Celtic area a rich profusion of grave-goods has been found, consisting of weapons, armour, chariots, utensils, ornaments, and coins.<sup>1111</sup> Some of the interments undoubtedly point to sacrifice of wife, children, or slaves at the grave. Male and female skeletons are often in close proximity, in one case the arm of the male encircling the neck of the female. In other cases the remains of children are found with these. Or while the lower interment is richly provided with grave-goods, above it lie irregularly several skeletons, without grave-goods, and often with head separated from the body, pointing to decapitation, while in one case the arms had been tied behind the back.<sup>1112</sup> All this suggests, taken in connection with classical evidence regarding burial customs, that the future life was life in the body, and that it was a *replica* of this life, with the same affections, needs, and energies. Certain passages in Irish texts also describe burials, and tell how the dead were interred with ornaments and weapons, while it was a common custom to bury the dead warrior in his armour, fully armed, and facing the region whence enemies might be expected. Thus he was a perpetual menace to them and prevented their attack.<sup>1113</sup> Possibly this belief may account for the elevated position of many tumuli. Animals were also sacrificed. Hostages were buried alive

with Fiachra, according to one text, and the wives of heroes sometimes express their desire to be buried along with their dead husbands.<sup>[1114](#)</sup>

The idea that the body as well as the soul was immortal was probably linked on to a very primitive belief regarding the dead, and one shared by many peoples, that they lived on in the grave. This conception was never forgotten, even in regions where the theory of a distant land of the dead was evolved, or where the body was consumed by fire before burial. It appears from such practices as binding the dead with cords, or laying heavy stones or a mound of earth on the grave, probably to prevent their egress, or feeding the dead with sacrificial food at the grave, or from the belief that the dead come forth not as spirits, but in the body from the grave. This primitive conception, of which the belief in a subterranean world of the dead is an extension, long survived among various races, *e.g.* the Scandinavians, who believed in the barrow as the abiding place of the dead, while they also had their conception of Hel and Valhalla, or among the Slavs, side by side with Christian conceptions.<sup>[1115](#)</sup> It also survived among the Celts, though another belief in the *orbis alius* had arisen. This can be shown from modern and ancient folk-belief and custom.

In numerous Celtic folk-tales the dead rise in the body, not as ghosts, from the grave, which is sometimes described as a house in which they live. They perform their ordinary occupations in house or field; they eat with the living, or avenge themselves upon them; if scourged, blood is drawn from their bodies; and, in one curious Breton tale, a dead husband visits his wife in bed and she then has a child by him, because, as he said, "*sa compte d'enfants*" was not yet complete.<sup>[1116](#)</sup> In other stories a corpse becomes animated and speaks or acts in presence of the living, or from the tomb itself when it is disturbed.<sup>[1117](#)</sup> The earliest literary example of such a tale is the tenth century "*Adventures of Nera*," based on older sources. In this Nera goes to tie a withy to the foot of a man who has been hung. The corpse begs a drink, and then forces Nera to carry him to a house, where he kills two sleepers.<sup>[1118](#)</sup> All such stories, showing as they do that a corpse is really living, must in essence be of great antiquity. Another common belief, found over the Celtic area, is that the dead rise from the grave, not as ghosts, when

they will, and that they appear *en masse* on the night of All Saints, and join the living.<sup>[1119](#)</sup>

As a result of such beliefs, various customs are found in use, apparently to permit of the corpse having freedom of movement, contrary to the older custom of preventing its egress from the grave. In the west of Ireland the feet of the corpse are left free, and the nails are drawn from the coffin at the grave. In the Hebrides the threads of the shroud are cut or the bindings of feet, hands, and face are raised when the body is placed in the coffin, and in Brittany the arms and feet are left free when the corpse is dressed.<sup>[1120](#)</sup> The reason is said to be that the spirit may have less trouble in getting to the spirit world, but it is obvious that a more material view preceded and still underlies this later gloss. Many stories are told illustrating these customs, and the earlier belief, Christianised, appears in the tale of a woman who haunted her friends because they had made her grave-clothes so short that the fires of Purgatory burnt her knees.<sup>[1121](#)</sup>

Earlier customs recorded among the Celts also point to the existence of this primitive belief influencing actual custom. Nicander says that the Celts went by night to the tombs of great men to obtain oracles, so much did they believe that they were still living there.<sup>[1122](#)</sup> In Ireland, oracles were also sought by sleeping on funeral cairns, and it was to the grave of Fergus that two bards resorted in order to obtain from him the lost story of the *Táin*. We have also seen how, in Ireland, armed heroes exerted a sinister influence upon enemies from their graves, which may thus have been regarded as their homes—a belief also underlying the Welsh story of Bran's head.

Where was the world of the dead situated? M. Reinach has shown, by a careful comparison of the different uses of the word *orbis*, that Lucan's words do not necessarily mean "another world," but "another region," *i.e.* of this world.<sup>[1123](#)</sup> If the Celts cherished so firmly the belief that the dead lived on in the grave, a belief in an underworld of the dead was bound in course of time to have been evolved as part of their creed. To it all graves and tumuli would give access. Classical observers apparently held that the Celtic future state was like their own in being an underworld region, since they speak of the dead Celts as *inferi*, or as going *ad Manes*, and Plutarch

makes Camma speak of descending to her dead husband.<sup>1124</sup> What differentiated it from their own gloomy underworld was its exuberant life and immortality. This aspect of a subterranean land presented no difficulty to the Celt, who had many tales of an underworld or under-water region more beautiful and blissful than anything on earth. Such a subterranean world must have been that of the Celtic Dispater, a god of fertility and growth, the roots of things being nourished from his kingdom. From him men had descended,<sup>1125</sup> probably a myth of their coming forth from his subterranean kingdom, and to him they returned after death to a blissful life.

Several writers, notably M. D'Arbois, assume that the *orbis alius* of the dead was the Celtic island Elysium. But that Elysium *never* appears in the tales as a land of the dead. It is a land of gods and deathless folk who are not those who have passed from this world by death. Mortals may reach it by favour, but only while still in life. It might be argued that Elysium was regarded in pagan times as the land of the dead, but after Christian eschatological views prevailed, it became a kind of fairyland. But the existing tales give no hint of this, and, after being carefully examined, they show that Elysium had always been a place distinct from that of the departed, though there may have arisen a tendency to confuse the two.

If there was a genuine Celtic belief in an island of the dead, it could have been no more than a local one, else Cæsar would not have spoken as he does of the Celtic Dispater. Such a local belief now exists on the Breton coast, but it is mainly concerned with the souls of the drowned.<sup>1126</sup> A similar local belief may explain the story told by Procopius, who says that Brittia (Britain), an island lying off the mouth of the Rhine, is divided from north to south by a wall beyond which is a noxious region. This is a distorted reminiscence of the Roman wall, which would appear to run in this direction if Ptolemy's map, in which Scotland lies at right angles to England, had been consulted. Thither fishermen from the opposite coast are compelled to ferry over at dead of night the shades of the dead, unseen to them, but marshalled by a mysterious leader.<sup>1127</sup> Procopius may have mingled some local belief with the current tradition that Ulysses' island of the shades lay in the north, or in the west.<sup>1128</sup> In any case his story makes of

the gloomy land of the shades a very different region from the blissful Elysium of the Celts and from their joyous *orbis alius*, nor is it certain that he is referring to a Celtic people.

Traces of the idea of an underworld of the dead exist in Breton folk-belief. The dead must travel across a subterranean ocean, and though there is scarcely any tradition regarding what happens on landing, M. Sébillot thinks that formerly "there existed in the subterranean world a sort of centralisation of the different states of the dead." If so, this must have been founded on pagan belief. The interior of the earth is also believed to be the abode of fabulous beings, of giants, and of fantastic animals, and there is also a subterranean fairy world. In all this we may see a survival of the older belief, modified by Christian teaching, since the Bretons suppose that purgatory and hell are beneath the earth and accessible from its surface.<sup>[1129](#)</sup>

Some British folk-lore brought to Greece by Demetrius and reported by Plutarch might seem to suggest that certain persons—the mighty dead—were privileged to pass to the island Elysium. Some islands near Britain were called after gods and heroes, and the inhabitants of one of these were regarded as sacrosanct by the Britons, like the priestesses of Sena. They were visited by Demetrius, who was told that the storms which arose during his visit were caused by the passing away of some of the "mighty" or of the "great souls." It may have been meant that such mighty ones passed to the more distant islands, but this is certainly not stated. In another island, Kronos was imprisoned, watched over by Briareus, and guarded by demons.<sup>[1130](#)</sup> Plutarch refers to these islands in another work, repeating the story of Kronos, and saying that his island is mild and fragrant, that people live there waiting on the god who sometimes appears to them and prevents their departing. Meanwhile they are happy and know no care, spending their time in sacrificing and hymn-singing or in studying legends and philosophy.

Plutarch has obviously mingled Celtic Elysium beliefs with the classical conception of the Druids.<sup>[1131](#)</sup> In Elysium there is no care, and favoured mortals who pass there are generally prevented from returning to earth. The reference to Kronos may also be based partly on myths of Celtic gods of Elysium, partly on tales of heroes who departed to mysterious islands or to

the hollow hills where they lie asleep, but whence they will one day return to benefit their people. So Arthur passed to Avalon, but in other tales he and his warriors are asleep beneath Craig-y-Ddinas, just as Fionn and his men rest within this or that hill in the Highlands. Similar legends are told of other Celtic heroes, and they witness to the belief that great men who had died would return in the hour of their people's need. In time they were thought not to have died at all, but to be merely sleeping and waiting for their hour.<sup>1132</sup> The belief is based on the idea that the dead are alive in grave or barrow, or in a spacious land below the earth, or that dead warriors can menace their foes from the tomb.

Thus neither in old sagas, nor in *Märchen*, nor in popular tradition, is the island Elysium a world of the dead. For the most part the pagan eschatology has been merged in that of Christianity, while the Elysium belief has remained intact and still survives in a whole series of beautiful tales.

The world of the dead was in all respects a *replica* of this world, but it was happier. In existing Breton and Irish belief—a survival of the older conception of the bodily state of the dead—they resume their tools, crafts, and occupations, and they preserve their old feelings. Hence, when they appear on earth, it is in bodily form and in their customary dress. Like the pagan Gauls, the Breton remembers unpaid debts, and cannot rest till they are paid, and in Brittany, Ireland, and the Highlands the food and clothes given to the poor after a death, feed and clothe the dead in the other world.<sup>1133</sup> If the world of the dead was subterranean,—a theory supported by current folk-belief,<sup>1134</sup>—the Earth-goddess or the Earth-god, who had been first the earth itself, then a being living below its surface and causing fertility, could not have become the divinity of the dead until the multitude of single graves or barrows, in each of which the dead lived, had become a wide subterranean region of the dead. This divinity was the source of life and growth; hence he or she was regarded as the progenitor of mankind, who had come forth from the underworld and would return there at death. It is not impossible that the Breton conception of Ankou, death personified, is a reminiscence of the Celtic Dispater. He watches over all things beyond the



grave, and carries off the dead to his kingdom. But if so he has been altered for the worse by mediæval ideas of "Death the skeleton".<sup>1135</sup> He is a grisly god of death, whereas the Celtic Dis was a beneficent god of the dead who enjoyed a happy immortality. They were not cold phantasms, but alive and endowed with corporeal form and able to enjoy the things of a better existence, and clad in the beautiful raiment and gaudy ornaments which were loved so much on earth. Hence Celtic warriors did not fear death, and suicide was extremely common, while Spanish Celts sang hymns in praise of death, and others celebrated the birth of men with mourning, but their deaths with joy.<sup>1136</sup> Lucan's words are thus the truest expression of Celtic eschatology—"In another region the spirit animates the members; death, if your lore be true, is but the passage to enduring life."

There is no decisive evidence pointing to any theory of moral retribution beyond the grave among the pagan Celts. Perhaps, since the hope of immortality made warriors face death without a tremor, it may have been held, as many other races have believed, that cowards would miss the bliss of the future state. Again, in some of the Irish Christian visions of the other-world and in existing folk-belief, certain characteristics of hell may not be derived from Christian eschatology, *e.g.* the sufferings of the dead from cold.<sup>1137</sup> This might point to an old belief in a cold region whither some of the dead were banished. In the *Adventures of S. Columba's Clerics*, hell is reached by a bridge over a glen of fire,<sup>1138</sup> and a narrow bridge leading to the other world is a common feature in most mythologies. But here it may be borrowed from Scandinavian sources, or from such Christian writings as the *Dialogues* of S. Gregory the Great.<sup>1139</sup> It might be contended that the Christian doctrine of hell has absorbed an earlier pagan theory of retribution, but of this there is now no trace in the sagas or in classical references to the Celtic belief in the future life. Nor is there any reference to a day of judgment, for the passage in which Loegaire speaks of the dead buried with their weapons till "the day of Erdathe," though glossed "the day of judgment of the Lord," does not refer to such a judgment.<sup>1140</sup> If an ethical blindness be attributed to the Celts for their apparent lack of any theory of retribution, it should be remembered that we must not judge a



people's ethics wholly by their views of future punishment. Scandinavians, Greeks, and Semites up to a certain stage were as unethical as the Celts in this respect, and the Christian hell, as conceived by many theologians, is far from suggesting an ethical Deity.

[1102.](#) Skene, i. 370.

[1103.](#) Cæsar, vi. 14, 19.

[1104.](#) Diod. Sic. v, 28.

[1105.](#) Val. Max. vi. 6. 10.

[1106.](#) *Phars.* i. 455 f.

[1107.](#) Amm. Marc. xv. 9; Strabo, iv. 4; Mela, iii. 2.

[1108.](#) Miss Hull, 275.

[1109.](#) Nutt-Meyer, i. 49; Miss Hull, 293.

[1110.](#) Larminie, 155; Hyde, *Beside the Fire*, 21, 153; *CM* xiii. 21; Campbell, *WHT*, ii. 21; Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, i. p. xii.

[1111.](#) Von Sacken, *Das Grabfeld von Hallstatt*; Greenwell, *British Barrows*; *RC* x. 234; *Antiquary*, xxxvii. 125; Blanchet, ii. 528 f.; Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times*.

[1112.](#) *L'Anthropologie*, vi. 586; Greenwell, *op. cit.* 119.

[1113.](#) Nutt-Meyer, i. 52; O'Donovan, *Annals*, i. 145, 180; *RC* xv. 28. In one case the enemy disinter the body of the king of Connaught, and rebury it face downwards, and then obtain a victory. This nearly coincides with the dire results following the disinterment of Bran's head (O'Donovan, i. 145; cf. p. 242, *supra*).

[1114.](#) *LU* 130a; *RC* xxiv. 185; O'Curry, *MC* i. p. cccxxx; Campbell, *WHT* iii. 62; Leahy, i. 105.

[1115.](#) Vigfusson-Powell, *Corpus Poet. Boreale*, i. 167, 417-418, 420; and see my *Childhood of Fiction*, 103 f.

[1116.](#) Larminie, 31; Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, ii. 146, 159, 161, 184, 257 (the rôle of the dead husband is usually taken by a *lutin* or *follet*, Luzel, *Veillées Bretons*, 79); *Rev. des Trad. Pop.* ii. 267; *Ann. de Bretagne*, viii. 514.

[1117.](#) Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, i. 313. Cf. also an incident in the *Voyage of Maelduin*.

[1118.](#) *RC* x. 214f. Cf. Kennedy, 162; Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, i. 217, for variants.

[1119.](#) Curtin, *Tales*, 156; see p. 170, *supra*.

[1120.](#) Curtin, *Tales*, 156; Campbell, *Superstitions*, 241; *Folk-Lore*, xiii. 60; Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, i. 213.

[1121.](#) *Folk-Lore*, ii. 26; Yeats, *Celtic Twilight*, 166.

[1122.](#) Tertullian, *de Anima*, 21.

[1123.](#) Reinach, *RC* xxii. 447.

[1124.](#) Val. Max. vi. 6; Mela, iii. 2. 19; Plut. *Virt. mul* 20.

[1125.](#) See p. 229, *supra*.

[1126.](#) Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, i. p. xxxix. This is only one out of many local beliefs (cf. Sébillot, ii. 149).

[1127.](#) Procop. *De Bello Goth.* vi. 20.

[1128.](#) Claudian, *In Rufin.* i. 123.

[1129.](#) Sébillot, i. 418 f.

[1130.](#) *de Defectu Orac.* 18. An occasional name for Britain in the *Mabinogion* is "the island of the Mighty" (Loth, i. 69, *et passim*). To the storm incident and the passing of the mighty, there is a curious parallel in Fijian belief. A clap of thunder was explained as "the noise of a spirit, we being near the place in which spirits plunge to enter the other world, and a chief in the neighbourhood having just died" (Williams, *Fiji*, i. 204).

[1131.](#) *de Facie Lunoe*, 26.

[1132.](#) See Hartland, *Science of Fairy Tales*, 209; Macdougall, *Folk and Hero Tales*, 73, 263; Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, i. p. xxx. Mortals sometimes penetrated to the presence of these heroes, who awoke. If the visitor had the courage to tell them that the hour had not yet come, they fell asleep again, and he escaped. In Brittany, rocky clefts are believed to be the entrance to the world of the dead, like the cave of Lough Dearg. Similar stories were probably told of these in pagan times, though they are now adapted to Christian beliefs in purgatory or hell.

[1133.](#) Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, i. p. xl, ii. 4; Curtin, 10; MacPhail, *Folk-Lore*, vi. 170.

[1134.](#) See p. 338, *supra*, and Logan, *Scottish Gael*, ii. 374; *Folk-Lore*, viii. 208, 253.

[1135.](#) Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, i. 96, 127, 136f., and Intro, xlv.

[1136.](#) Philostratus, *Apoll. of Tyana*, v. 4; Val. Max. ii. 6. 12.

[1137.](#) Le Braz<sup>1</sup>, ii. 91; Curtin, *Tales*, 146. The punishment of suffering from ice and snow appears in the *Apocalypse of Paul* and in later Christian accounts of hell.

[1138.](#) *RC* xxvi. 153.

[1139.](#) Bk. iv. ch. 36.

[1140.](#) *Erdathe*, according to D'Arbois, means (1) "the day in which the dead will resume his colour," from *dath*, "colour"; (2) "the agreeable day," from *data*, "agreeable" (D'Arbois, i. 185; cf. *Les Druides*, 135).

# Rebirth and Transmigration

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In Irish sagas, rebirth is asserted only of divinities or heroes, and, probably because this belief was obnoxious to Christian scribes, while some MSS. tell of it in the case of certain heroic personages, in others these same heroes are said to have been born naturally. There is no textual evidence that it was attributed to ordinary mortals, and it is possible that, if classical observers did not misunderstand the Celtic doctrine of the future life, their references to rebirth may be based on mythical tales regarding gods or heroes. We shall study these tales as they are found in Irish texts.

In the mythological cycle, as has been seen, Etain, in insect form, fell into a cup of wine. She was swallowed by Etar, and in due time was reborn as a child, who was eventually married by Eochaid Airem, but recognized and carried off by her divine spouse Mider. Etain, however, had quite forgotten her former existence as a goddess.<sup>[1141](#)</sup>

In one version of Cúchulainn's birth story Dechtire and her women fly away as birds, but are discovered at last by her brother Conchobar in a strange house, where Dechtire gives birth to a child, of whom the god Lug is apparently the father. In another version the birds are not Dechtire and her women, for she accompanies Conchobar as his charioteer. They arrive at the house, the mistress of which gives birth to a child, which Dechtire brings up. It dies, and on her return from the burial Dechtire swallows a small animal when drinking. Lug appears to her by night, and tells her that he was the child, and that now she was with child by him (*i.e.* he was the animal swallowed by her). When he was born he would be called Setanta, who was later named Cúchulainn. Cúchulainn, in this version, is thus a rebirth of Lug, as well as his father.<sup>[1142](#)</sup>

In the *Tale of the Two Swineherds*, Friuch and Rucht are herds of the gods Ochall and Bodb. They quarrel, and their fighting in various animal shapes is fully described. Finally they become two worms, which are swallowed by two cows; these then give birth to the Whitehorn and to the

Black Bull of Cuailgne, the animals which were the cause of the *Táin*. The swineherds were probably themselves gods in the older versions of this tale.<sup>[1143](#)</sup>

Other stories relate the rebirth of heroes. Conchobar is variously said to be son of Nessa by her husband Cathbad, or by her lover Fachtna. But in the latter version an incident is found which points to a third account. Nessa brings Cathbad a draught from a river, but in it are two worms which he forces her to swallow. She gives birth to a son, in each of whose hands is a worm, and he is called Conchobar, after the name of the river into which he fell soon after his birth. The incident closes with the words, "It was from these worms that she became pregnant, say some."<sup>[1144](#)</sup> Possibly the divinity of the river had taken the form of the worms and was reborn as Conchobar. We may compare the story of the birth of Conall Cernach. His mother was childless, until a Druid sang spells over a well in which she bathed, and drank of its waters. With the draught she swallowed a worm, "and the worm was in the hand of the boy as he lay in his mother's womb; and he pierced the hand and consumed it."<sup>[1145](#)</sup>

The personality of Fionn is also connected with the rebirth idea. In one story, Mongan, a seventh-century king, had a dispute with his poet regarding the death of the hero Fothad. The Fian Caoilte returns from the dead to prove Mongan right, and he says, "We were with thee, with Fionn." Mongan bids him be silent, because he did not wish his identity with Fionn to be made known. "Mongan, however, was Fionn, though he would not let it be told."<sup>[1146](#)</sup> In another story Mongan is son of Manannan, who had prophesied of this event. Manannan appeared to the wife of Fiachna when he was fighting the Saxons, and told her that unless she yielded herself to him her husband would be slain. On hearing this she agreed, and next day the god appeared fighting with Fiachna's forces and routed the slain. "So that this Mongan is a son of Manannan mac Lir, though he is called Mongan son of Fiachna."<sup>[1147](#)</sup> In a third version Manannan makes the bargain with Fiachna, and in his form sleeps with the woman. Simultaneously with Mongan's birth, Fiachna's attendant had a son who became Mongan's servant, and a warrior's wife bears a daughter who

became his wife. Manannan took Mongan to the Land of Promise and kept him there until he was sixteen.<sup>1148</sup> Many magical powers and the faculty of shape-shifting are attributed to Mongan, and in some stories he is brought into connection with the *síd*.<sup>1149</sup> Probably a myth told how he went to Elysium instead of dying, for he comes from "the Land of Living Heart" to speak with S. Columba, who took him to see heaven. But he would not satisfy the saints' curiosity regarding Elysium, and suddenly vanished, probably returning there.<sup>1150</sup>

This twofold account of Mongan's birth is curious. Perhaps the idea that he was a rebirth of Fionn may have been suggested by the fact that his father was called Fiachna Finn, while it is probable that some old myth of a son of Manannan's called Mongan was attached to the personality of the historic Mongan.

About the era of Mongan, King Diarmaid had two wives, one of whom was barren. S. Finnen gave her holy water to drink, and she brought forth a lamb; then, after a second draught, a trout, and finally, after a third, Aed Slane, who became high king of Ireland in 594. This is a Christianised version of the story of Conall Cernach's birth.<sup>1151</sup>

In Welsh mythology the story of Taliesin affords an example of rebirth. After the transformation combat of the goddess Cerridwen and Gwion, resembling that of the swine-herds, Gwion becomes a grain of wheat, which Cerridwen in the form of a hen swallows, with the result that he is reborn of her as Taliesin.<sup>1152</sup>

Most of these stories no longer exist in their primitive form, and various ideas are found in them—conception by magical means, divine descent through the *amour* of a divinity and a mortal, and rebirth.

As to the first, the help of magician or priest is often invoked in savage society and even in European folk-custom in case of barrenness. Prayers, charms, potions, or food are the means used to induce conception, but perhaps at one time these were thought to cause it of themselves. In many tales the swallowing of a seed, fruit, insect, etc., results in the birth of a hero or heroine, and it is probable that these stories embody actual belief in such a possibility. If the stories of Conall Cernach and Aed Slane are not

attenuated instances of rebirth, say, of the divinity of a well, they are examples of this belief. The gift of fruitfulness is bestowed by Druid and saint, but in the story of Conall it is rather the swallowing of the worm than the Druid's incantation that causes conception, and is the real *motif* of the tale.

Where the rebirth of a divinity occurs as the result of the swallowing of a small animal, it is evident that the god has first taken this form. The Celt, believing in conception by swallowing some object, and in shape-shifting, combined his information, and so produced a third idea, that a god could take the form of a small animal, which, when swallowed, became his rebirth.<sup>1153</sup> If, as the visits of barren women to dolmens and megalithic monuments suggest, the Celts believed in the possibility of the spirit of a dead man entering a woman and being born of her or at least aiding conception,—a belief held by other races,<sup>1154</sup>—this may have given rise to myths regarding the rebirth of gods by human mothers. At all events this latter Celtic belief is paralleled by the American Indian myths, *e.g.* of the Thlinkeet god Yehl who transformed himself now into a pebble, now into a blade of grass, and, being thus swallowed by women, was reborn.

In the stories of Etain and of Lud, reborn as Setanta, this idea of divine transformation and rebirth occurs. A similar idea may underlie the tale of Fionn and Mongan. As to the tales of Gwion and the Swineherds, the latter the servants of gods, and perhaps themselves regarded once as divinities, who in their rebirth as bulls are certainly divine animals, they present some features which require further consideration. The previous transformations in both cases belong to the Transformation Combat formula of many *Märchen*, and obviously were not part of the original form of the myths. In all such *Märchen* the antagonists are males, hence the rebirth incident could not form part of them. In the Welsh tale of Gwion and in the corresponding Taliesin poem, the ingenious fusion of the *Märchen* formula with an existing myth of rebirth must have taken place at an early date.<sup>1155</sup> This is also true of *The Two Swineherds*, but in this case, since the myth told how two gods took the form of worms and were reborn of cows, the formula had to be altered. Both remain alive at the end of the combat, contrary to the

usual formula, because both were males and both were reborn. The fusion is skilful, because the reborn personages preserve a remembrance of their former transformations,<sup>1156</sup> just as Mongan knows of his former existence as Fionn. In other cases there is no such remembrance. Etain had forgotten her former existence, and Cúchulainn does not appear to know that he is a rebirth of Lug.

The relation of Lug to Cúchulainn deserves further inquiry. While the god is reborn he is also existing as Lug, just as having been swallowed as a worm by Dechtire, he appears in his divine form and tells her he will be born of her. In the *Táin* he appears fighting for Cúchulainn, whom he there calls his son. There are thus two aspects of the hero's relationship to Lug; in one he is a rebirth of the god, in the other he is his son, as indeed he seems to represent himself in *The Wooing of Emer*, and as he is called by Laborcham just before his death.<sup>1157</sup> In one of the birth-stories he is clearly Lug's son by Dechtire. But both versions may simply be different aspects of one belief, namely, that a god could be reborn as a mortal and yet continue his divine existence, because all birth is a kind of rebirth. The men of Ulster sought a wife for Cúchulainn, "knowing that his rebirth would be of himself," *i.e.* his son would be himself even while he continued to exist as his father. Examples of such a belief occur elsewhere, *e.g.* in the *Laws of Manu*, where the husband is said to be reborn of his wife, and in ancient Egypt, where the gods were called "self-begotten," because each was father to the son who was his true image or himself. Likeness implied identity, in primitive belief. Thus the belief in mortal descent from the gods among the Celts may have involved the theory of a divine avatar. The god became father of a mortal by a woman, and part of himself passed over to the child, who was thus the god himself.

Conchobar was also a rebirth of a god, but he was named from the river whence his mother had drawn water containing the worms which she swallowed. This may point to a lost version in which he was the son of a river-god by Nessa. This was quite in accordance with Celtic belief, as is shown by such names as Dubrogenos, from *dubron*, "water," and *genos*, "born of"; Divogenos, Divogena, "son or daughter of a god," possibly a



river-god, since *deivos* is a frequent river name; and Rhenogenus, "son of the Rhine."<sup>1158</sup> The persons who first bore these names were believed to have been begotten by divinities. Mongan's descent from Manannan, god of the sea, is made perfectly clear, and the Welsh name Morgen = *Morigenos*, "son of the sea," probably points to a similar tale now lost. Other Celtic names are frequently pregnant with meaning, and tell of a once-existing rich mythology of divine *amours* with mortals. They show descent from deities—Camulogenus (son of Camulos), Esugenos (son of Esus), Boduogenus (son of Bodva); or from tree-spirits—Dergen (son of the oak), Vernogenus (son of the alder); or from divine animals—Arthgen (son of the bear), Urogenus (son of the urus).<sup>1159</sup> What was once an epithet describing divine filiation became later a personal name. So in Greece names like Apollogenes, Diogenes, and Hermogenes, had once been epithets of heroes born of Apollo, Zeus, and Hermes.

Thus it was a vital Celtic belief that divinities might unite with mortals and beget children. Heroes enticed away to Elysium enjoyed the love of its goddesses—Cúchulainn that of Fand; Connla, Bran, and Oisín that of unnamed divinities. So, too, the goddess Morrigan offered herself to Cúchulainn. The Christian Celts of the fifth century retained this belief, though in a somewhat altered form. S. Augustine and others describe the shaggy demons called *dusii* by the Gauls, who sought the couches of women in order to gratify their desires.<sup>1160</sup> The *dusii* are akin to the *incubi* and *fauni*, and do not appear to represent the higher gods reduced to the form of demons by Christianity, but rather a species of lesser divinities, once the object of popular devotion.

These beliefs are also connected with the Celtic notions of transformation and transmigration—the one signifying the assuming of another shape for a time, the other the passing over of the soul or the personality into another body, perhaps one actually existing, but more usually by actual rebirth. As has been seen, this power of transformation was claimed by the Druids and by other persons, or attributed to them, and they were not likely to minimise their powers, and would probably boast of them on all occasions. Such boasts are put into the mouths of the Irish

Amairgen and the Welsh Taliesin. As the Milesians were approaching Ireland, Amairgen sang verses which were perhaps part of a ritual chant:

"I am the wind which blows over the sea,  
I am the wave of the ocean,  
I am the bull of seven battles,  
I am the eagle on the rock...  
I am a boar for courage,  
I am a salmon in the water, etc."[1161](#)

Professor Rhys points out that some of these verses need not mean actual transformation, but mere likeness, through "a primitive formation of predicate without the aid of a particle corresponding to such a word as 'like.'"[1162](#) Enough, however, remains to show the claim of the magician. Taliesin, in many poems, makes similar claims, and says, "I have been in a multitude of shapes before I assumed a consistent form"—that of a sword, a tear, a star, an eagle, etc. Then he was created, without father or mother.[1163](#) Similar pretensions are common to the medicine-man everywhere. But from another point of view they may be mere poetic extravagances such as are common in Celtic poetry.[1164](#) Thus Cúchulainn says: "I was a hound strong for combat ... their little champion ... the casket of every secret for the maidens," or, in another place, "I am the bark buffeted from wave to wave ... the ship after the losing of its rudder ... the little apple on the top of the tree that little thought of its falling."[1165](#) These are metaphoric descriptions of a comparatively simple kind. The full-blown bombast appears in the *Colloquy of the Two Sages*, where Nede and Fercertne exhaust language in describing themselves to each other.[1166](#) Other Welsh bards besides Taliesin make similar boasts to his, and Dr. Skene thinks that their claims "may have been mere bombast."[1167](#) Still some current belief in shape-shifting, or even in rebirth, underlies some of these boastings and gives point to them. Amairgen's "I am" this or that, suggests the inherent power of transformation; Taliesin's "I have been," the actual transformations. Such assertions do not involve "the powerful pantheistic doctrine which is at

once the glory and error of Irish philosophy," as M. D'Arbois claims,<sup>1168</sup> else are savage medicine-men, boastful of their shape-shifting powers, philosophic pantheists. The poems are merely highly developed forms of primitive beliefs in shape-shifting, such as are found among all savages and barbaric folk, but expressed in the boastful language in which the Celt delighted.

How were the successive shape-shiftings effected? To answer this we shall first look at the story of Tuan Mac Caraill, who survived from the days of Partholan to those of S. Finnen. He was a decrepit man at the coming of Nemed, and one night, having lain down to sleep, he awoke as a stag, and lived in this form to old age. In the same way he became a boar, a hawk, and a salmon, which was caught and eaten by Cairell's wife, of whom he was born as Tuan, with a perfect recollection of his different forms.<sup>1169</sup>

This story, the invention of a ninth or tenth century Christian scribe to account for the current knowledge of the many invasions of Ireland,<sup>1170</sup> must have been based on pagan myths of a similar kind, involving successive transformations and a final rebirth. Such a myth may have been told of Taliesin, recounting his transformations and his final rebirth, the former being replaced at a later time by the episode of the Transformation Combat, involving no great lapse of time. Such a series of successive shapes—of every beast, a dragon, a wolf, a stag, a salmon, a seal, a swan—were ascribed to Mongan and foretold by Manannan, and Mongan refers to some of them in his colloquy with S. Columba—"when I was a deer ... a salmon ... a seal ... a roving wolf ... a man."<sup>1171</sup> Perhaps the complete story was that of a fabulous hero in human form, who assumed different shapes, and was finally reborn. But the transformation of an old man, or an old animal, into new youthful and vigorous forms might be regarded as a kind of transmigration—an extension of the transformation idea, but involving no metempsychosis, no passing of the soul into another body by rebirth. Actual transmigration or rebirth occurs only at the end of the series, and, as in the case of Etain, Lug, etc., the pre-existent person is born of a woman after being swallowed by her. Possibly the transformation belief has reacted on the other, and obscured a belief in actual metempsychosis as a result of

the soul of an ancestor passing into a woman and being reborn as her next child. Add to this that the soul is often thought of as a tiny animal, and we see how a *point d'appui* for the more materialistic belief was afforded. The insect or worms of the rebirth stories may have been once forms of the soul. It is easy also to see how, a theory of conception by swallowing various objects being already in existence, it might be thought possible that eating a salmon—a transformed man—would cause his rebirth from the eater.

The Celts may have had no consistent belief on this subject, the general idea of the future life being of a different kind. Or perhaps the various beliefs in transformation, transmigration, rebirth, and conception by unusual means, are too inextricably mingled to be separated. The nucleus of the tales seems to be the possibility of rebirth, and the belief that the soul was still clad in a bodily form after death and was itself a material thing. But otherwise some of them are not distinctively Celtic, and have been influenced by old *Märchen* formulæ of successive changes adopted by or forced upon some person, who is finally reborn. This formulæ is already old in the fourteenth century B.C. Egyptian story of the *Two Brothers*.

Such Celtic stories as these may have been known to classical authors, and have influenced their statements regarding eschatology. Yet it can hardly be said that the tales themselves bear witness to a general transmigration doctrine current among the Celts, since the stories concern divine or heroic personages. Still the belief may have had a certain currency among them, based on primitive theories of soul life. Evidence that it existed side by side with the more general doctrines of the future life may be found in old or existing folk-belief. In some cases the dead have an animal form, as in the *Voyage of Maelduin*, where birds on an island are said to be souls, or in the legend of S. Maelsuthain, whose pupils appear to him after death as birds.<sup>[1172](#)</sup> The bird form of the soul after death is still a current belief in the Hebrides. Butterflies in Ireland, and moths in Cornwall, and in France bats or butterflies, are believed to be souls of the dead.<sup>[1173](#)</sup> King Arthur is thought by Cornishmen to have died and to have been changed into the form of a raven, and in mediæval Wales souls of the wicked appear as ravens, in Brittany as black dogs, petrels, or hares, or

serve their term of penitence as cows or bulls, or remain as crows till the day of judgment.<sup>1174</sup> Unbaptized infants become birds; drowned sailors appear as beasts or birds; and the souls of girls deceived by lovers haunt them as hares.<sup>1175</sup>

These show that the idea of transmigration may not have been foreign to the Celtic mind, and it may have arisen from the idea that men assumed their totem animal's shape at death. Some tales of shape-shifting are probably due to totemism, and it is to be noted that in Kerry peasants will not eat hares because they contain the souls of their grandmothers.<sup>1176</sup> On the other hand, some of these survivals may mean no more than that the soul itself has already an animal form, in which it would naturally be seen after death. In Celtic folk-belief the soul is seen leaving the body in sleep as a bee, butterfly, gnat, mouse, or mannikin.<sup>1177</sup> Such a belief is found among most savage races, and might easily be mistaken for transmigration, or also assist the formation of the idea of transmigration. Though the folk-survivals show that transmigration was not necessarily alleged of all the dead, it may have been a sufficiently vital belief to colour the mythology, as we see from the existing tales, adulterated though these may have been.

The general belief has its roots in primitive ideas regarding life and its propagation—ideas which some hold to be un-Celtic and un-Aryan. But Aryans were "primitive" at some period of their history, and it would be curious if, while still in a barbarous condition, they had forgotten their old beliefs. In any case, if they adopted similar beliefs from non-Aryan people, this points to no great superiority on their part. Such beliefs originated the idea of rebirth and transmigration.<sup>1178</sup> Nevertheless this was not a characteristically Celtic eschatological belief; that we find in the theory that the dead lived on in the body or assumed a body in another region, probably underground.

<sup>1141</sup>. For textual details see Zimmer, *Zeit. für Vergl. Sprach.* xxviii. 585 f. The tale is obviously archaic. For a translation see Leahy, i. 8 f.

<sup>1142</sup>. *IT* i. 134 f.; D'Arbois, v. 22. There is a suggestion in one of the versions of another story, in which Setanta is child of Conchobar and his sister Dechtire.

- [1143.](#) *IT* iii. 245; *RC* xv. 465; Nutt-Meyer, ii. 69.
- [1144.](#) Stowe MS. 992, *RC* vi. 174; *IT* ii. 210; D'Arbois, v. 3f.
- [1145.](#) *IT* iii. 393. Cf. the story of the wife of Cormac, who was barren till her mother gave her pottage. Then she had a daughter (*RC* xxii. 18).
- [1146.](#) Nutt-Meyer, i. 45 f., text and translation.
- [1147.](#) *Ibid.* 42 f.
- [1148.](#) *Ibid.* 58. The simultaneous birth formula occurs in many *Märchen*, though that of the future wife is not common.
- [1149.](#) Nutt-Meyer, i. 52, 57, 85, 87.
- [1150.](#) *ZCP* ii. 316 f. Here Mongan comes directly from Elysium, as does Oisín before meeting S. Patrick.
- [1151.](#) *IT* iii. 345; O'Grady, ii. 88. Cf. Rees, 331.
- [1152.](#) Guest, iii. 356 f.; see p. 116, *supra*.
- [1153.](#) In some of the tales the small animal still exists independently after the birth, but this is probably not their primitive form.
- [1154.](#) See my *Religion: Its Origin and Forms*, 76-77.
- [1155.](#) Skene, i. 532. After relating various shapes in which he has been, the poet adds that he has been a grain which a hen received, and that he rested in her womb as a child. The reference in this early poem from a fourteenth century MS. shows that the fusion of the *Märchen* formula with a myth of rebirth was already well known. See also Guest, iii. 362, for verses in which the transformations during the combat are exaggerated.
- [1156.](#) Skene, i. 276, 532.
- [1157.](#) Miss Hull, 67; D'Arbois, v. 331.
- [1158.](#) For various forms of *geno-*, see Holder, i. 2002; Stokes, *US* 110.
- [1159.](#) For all these names see Holder, *s.v.*
- [1160.](#) S. Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, xv. 23; Isidore, *Orat.* viii. 2. 103. *Dusios* may be connected with Lithuanian *dvaese*, "spirit," and perhaps with (Thehos) (Holder, *s.v.*). D'Arbois sees in the *dusii* water-spirits, and compares river-names like Dhuys, Duseva, Dusius (vi. 182; *RC* xix. 251). The word may be connected with Irish *duis*, glossed "noble" (Stokes, *TIG* 76). The Bretons still believe in fairies called *duz*, and our word *dizzy* may be connected with *dusios*, and would then have once signified the madness following on the *amour*, like Greek (nympholeptos), or "the inconvenience of their succubi," described by Kirk in his *Secret Commonwealth of the Elves*.
- [1161.](#) *LL* 12b; *TOS* v. 234.
- [1162.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 549.
- [1163.](#) Skene, i. 276, 309, etc.
- [1164.](#) Sigerson, *Bards of the Gael*, 379.

[1165.](#) Miss Hull, 288; Hyde, *Lit. Hist. of Ireland*, 300.

[1166.](#) *RC* xxvi. 21.

[1167.](#) Skene, ii. 506.

[1168.](#) D'Arbois, ii. 246, where he also derives Erigena's pantheism from Celtic beliefs, such as he supposes to be exemplified by these poems.

[1169.](#) *LU* 15a; D'Arbois, ii. 47 f.; Nutt-Meyer, ii. 294 f.

[1170.](#) Another method of accounting for this knowledge was to imagine a long-lived personage like Fintan who survived for 5000 years. D'Arbois, ii. ch. 4. Here there was no transformation or rebirth.

[1171.](#) Nutt-Meyer, i. 24; *ZCP* ii. 316.

[1172.](#) O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 78.

[1173.](#) Wood-Martin, *Pagan Ireland*, 140; *Choice Notes*, 61; Monnier, 143; Maury, 272.

[1174.](#) *Choice Notes*, 69; Rees, 92; Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, ii. 82, 86, 307; *Rev. des Trad. Pop.* xii. 394.

[1175.](#) Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, ii. 80; *Folk-lore Jour.* v. 189.

[1176.](#) *Folk-Lore*, iv. 352.

[1177.](#) Carmichael, *Carm. Gadel.* ii. 334; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* 602; Le Braz<sup>2</sup>, i. 179, 191, 200.

[1178.](#) Mr. Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, derived the origin of the rebirth conception from orgiastic cults.



# Elysium

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The Celtic conception of Elysium, the product at once of religion, mythology, and romantic imagination, is found in a series of Irish and Welsh tales. We do not know that a similar conception existed among the continental Celts, but, considering the likeness of their beliefs in other matters to those of the insular Celts, there is a strong probability that it did. There are four typical presentations of the Elysium conception. In Ireland, while the gods were believed to have retired within the hills or *síd*, it is not unlikely that some of them had always been supposed to live in these or in a subterranean world, and it is therefore possible that what may be called the subterranean or *síd* type of Elysium is old. But other types also appear—that of a western island Elysium, of a world below the waters, and of a world co-extensive with this and entered by a mist.

The names of the Irish Elysium are sometimes of a general character—Mag Mór, "the Great Plain"; Mag Mell, "the Pleasant Plain"; Tír n'Aill, "the Other-world"; Tir na m-Beo, "the Land of the Living"; Tír na n-Og, "the Land of Youth"; and Tír Tairngiri, "the Land of Promise"—possibly of Christian origin. Local names are Tír fa Tonn, "Land under Waves"; I-Bresail and the Land of Falga, names of the island Elysium. The last denotes the Isle of Man as Elysium, and it may have been so regarded by Goidels in Britain at an early time.<sup>[1179](#)</sup> To this period may belong the tales of Cúchulainn's raid on Falga, carried at a later time to Ireland. Tír Tairngiri is also identified with the Isle of Man.<sup>[1180](#)</sup>

A brief résumé of the principal Elysium tales is necessary as a preliminary to a discussion of the problems which they involve, though it can give but little idea of the beauty and romanticism of the tales themselves. These, if not actually composed in pagan times, are based upon story-germs current before the coming of Christianity to Ireland.

1. *The síd Elysium*.—In the story of Etain, when Mider discovered her in her rebirth, he described the land whither he would carry her, its music

and its fair people, its warm streams, its choice mead and wine. There is eternal youth, and love is blameless. It is within Mider's *síd*, and Etain accompanies him there. In the sequel King Eochaid's Druid discovers the *síd*, which is captured by the king, who then regains Etain.<sup>[1181](#)</sup> Other tales refer to the *síd* in similar terms, and describe its treasures, its food and drink better than those of earth. It is in most respects similar to the island Elysium, save that it is localised on earth.

2. *The island Elysium.*—The story of the voyage of Bran is found fragmentarily in the eleventh century *LU*, and complete in the fourteenth and sixteenth century MSS. It tells how Bran heard mysterious music when asleep. On waking he found a silver branch with blossoms, and next day there appeared a mysterious woman singing the glory of the land overseas, its music, its wonderful tree, its freedom from pain and death. It is one of thrice fifty islands to the west of Erin, and there she dwells with thousands of "motley women." Before she disappears the branch leaps into her hand. Bran set sail with his comrades and met Manannan crossing the sea in his chariot. The god told him that the sea was a flowery plain, Mag Mell, and that all around, unseen to Bran, were people playing and drinking "without sin." He bade him sail on to the Land of Women. Then the voyagers went on and reached the Isle of Joy, where one of their number remained behind. At last they came to the Land of Women, and we hear of their welcome, the dreamlike lapse of time, the food and drink which had for each the taste he desired. Finally the tale recounts their home-sickness, the warning they received not to set foot on Erin, how one of their number leaped ashore and turned to ashes, how Bran from his boat told of his wanderings and then disappeared for ever.<sup>[1182](#)</sup>

Another story tells how Connla was visited by a goddess from Mag Mell. Her people dwell in a *síd* and are called "men of the *síd*." She invites him to go to the immortal land, and departs, leaving him an apple, which supports him for a month without growing less. Then she reappears and tells Connla that "the Ever-Living Ones" desire him to join them. She bids him come with her to the Land of Joy where there are only women. He steps into her crystal boat and vanishes from his father and the Druid who

has vainly tried to exercise his spells against her.<sup>[1183](#)</sup> In this tale there is a confusion between the *síd* and the island Elysium.

The eighteenth century poem of Oisín in Tír na n-Og is probably based on old legends, and describes how Niam, daughter of the king of Tír na n-Og, placed *geasa* on Oisín to accompany her to that land of immortal youth and beauty. He mounted on her steed, which plunged forwards across the sea, and brought them to the land where Oisín spent three hundred years before returning to Ireland, and there suffering, as has been seen, from the breaking of the tabu not to set foot on the soil of Erin.<sup>[1184](#)</sup>

In *Serglige Conculaind*, "Cúchulainn's Sickness," the goddess Fand, deserted by Manannan, offers herself to the hero if he will help her sister's husband Labraid against his enemies in Mag Mell. Labraid lives in an island frequented by troops of women, and possessing an inexhaustible vat of mead and trees with magic fruit. It is reached with marvellous speed in a boat of bronze. After a preliminary visit by his charioteer Laeg, Cúchulainn goes thither, vanquishes Labraid's foes, and remains a month with Fand. He returns to Ireland, and now we hear of the struggle for him between his wife Emer and Fand. But Manannan suddenly appears, reawakens Fand's love, and she departs with him. The god shakes his cloak between her and Cúchulainn to prevent their ever meeting again.<sup>[1185](#)</sup> In this story Labraid, Fand, and Liban, Fand's sister, though dwellers on an island Elysium, are called *síd*-folk. The two regions are partially confused, but not wholly, since Manannan is described as coming from his own land (Elysium) to woo Fand. Apparently Labraid of the Swift Hand on the Sword (who, though called "chief of the *síde*", is certainly a war-god) is at enmity with Manannan's hosts, and it is these with whom Cúchulainn has to fight.<sup>[1186](#)</sup>

In an Ossianic tale several of the Fians were carried off to the Land of Promise. After many adventures, Fionn, Diarmaid, and others discover them, and threaten to destroy the land if they are not restored. Its king, Avarta, agrees to the restoration, and with fifteen of his men carries the Fians to Erin on one horse. Having reached there, he bids them look at a certain field, and while they are doing so, he and his men disappear.<sup>[1187](#)</sup>

3. *Land under Waves*.—Fiachna, of the men of the *síd*, appeared to the men of Connaught, and begged their help against Goll, who had abducted his wife. Loegaire and his men dive with Fiachna into Loch Naneane, and reach a wonderful land, with marvellous music and where the rain is ale. They and the *síd*-folk attack the fort of Mag Mell and defeat Goll. Each then obtains a woman of the *síde*, but at the end of a year they become homesick. They are warned not to descend from horseback in Erin. Arrived among their own people, they describe the marvels of Tír fa Tonn, and then return there, and are no more seen.<sup>1188</sup> Here, again, the *síd* Elysium and Land under Waves are confused, and the divine tribes are at war, as in the story of Cúchulainn.

In a section of the Ossianic tale just cited, Fionn and his men arrive on an island, where Diarmaid reaches a beautiful country at the bottom of a well. This is Tír fa Tonn, and Diarmaid fights its king who has usurped his nephew's inheritance, and thus recovers it for him.<sup>1189</sup>

4. *Co-extensive with this world*.—An early example of this type is found in the *Adventures of Cormac*. A divine visitant appeared to Cormac and gave him in exchange for his wife, son, and daughter, his branch of golden apples, which when shaken produced sweetest music, dispelling sorrow. After a year Cormac set out to seek his family, and as he journeyed encountered a mist in which he discovered a strange house. Its master and mistress—Manannan and his consort—offered him shelter. The god brought in a pig, every quarter of which was cooked in the telling of a true tale, the pig afterwards coming to life again. Cormac, in his tale, described how he had lost his family, whereupon Manannan made him sleep, and brought his wife and children in. Later he produced a cup which broke when a lie was told, but became whole again when a true word was spoken. The god said Cormac's wife had now a new husband, and the cup broke, but was restored when the goddess declared this to be a lie. Next morning all had disappeared, and Cormac and his family found themselves in his own palace, with cup and branch by their side.<sup>1190</sup> Similarly, in *The Champion's Ecstasy*, a mysterious horseman appears out of a mist to Conn and leads him to a palace, where he reveals himself as the god Lug, and where there is

a woman called "the Sovereignty of Erin." Beside the palace is a golden tree.<sup>1191</sup> In the story of Bran, Mag Mell is said to be all around the hero, though he knows it not—an analogous conception to what is found in these tales, and another instance is that of the mysterious house entered by Conchobar and Dechtire.<sup>1192</sup> Mag Mell may thus have been regarded as a mysterious district of Erin. This magic mist enclosing a marvellous dwelling occurs in many other tales, and it was in a mist that the Tuatha Déa came to Ireland.

A certain correspondence to these Irish beliefs is found in Brythonic story, but here the Elysium conception has been influenced by Christian ideas. Elysium is called *Annwfn*, meaning "an abyss," "the state of the dead," "hell," and it is also conceived of as *is elfydd*, "beneath the earth."<sup>1193</sup> But in the tales it bears no likeness to these meanings of the word, save in so far as it has been confused by their Christian redactors with hell. It is a region on the earth's surface or an over-or under-sea world, in which some of the characteristics of the Irish Elysium are found—a cauldron, a well of drink sweeter than wine, and animals greatly desired by mortals, while it is of great beauty and its people are not subject to death or disease. Hence the name *Annwfn* has probably taken the place of some earlier pagan title of Elysium.

In the tale of Pwyll, the earliest reference to *Annwfn* occurs. It is ruled by Arawn, at war with Hafgan. Arawn obtains the help of Pwyll by exchanging kingdoms with him for a year, and Pwyll defeats Hafgan. It is a beautiful land, where merriment and feasting go on continuously, and its queen is of great loveliness. It has no subterranean character, and is conceived apparently as contiguous to Pwyll's kingdom.<sup>1194</sup> In other tales it is the land whence Gwydion and others obtain various animals.<sup>1195</sup> The later folk-conception of the demoniac dogs of *Annwfn* may be based on an old myth of dogs with which its king hunted. These are referred to in the story of Pwyll.<sup>1196</sup>

*Annwfn* is also the name of a land under waves or over sea, called also *Caer Sidi*, "the revolving castle," about which "are ocean's streams." It is "known to Manawyddan and Pryderi," just as the Irish Elysium was ruled

by Manannan.<sup>[1197](#)</sup> Another "Caer of Defence" is beneath the waves.<sup>[1198](#)</sup> Perhaps the two ideas were interchangeable. The people of this land are free from death and disease, and in it is "an abundant well, sweeter than white wine the drink in it." There also is a cauldron belonging to the lord of Annwfn, which was stolen by Arthur and his men. Such a cauldron is the property of people belonging to a water world in the *Mabinogion*.<sup>[1199](#)</sup>

The description of the isle of Avallon (later identified with Glastonbury), whither Arthur was carried, completes the likeness to the Irish Elysium. No tempest, excess of heat or cold, nor noxious animal afflicts it; it is blessed with eternal spring and with fruit and flowers growing without labour; it is the land of eternal youth, unvisited by death or disease. It has a *regia virgo* lovelier than her lovely attendants; she cured Arthur of his wounds, hence she is the Morgen of other tales, and she and her maidens may be identified with the divine women of the Irish isle of women. Morgen is called a *dea phantastica*, and she may be compared with Liban, who cured Cúchulainn of his sickness.<sup>[1200](#)</sup>

The identification of Avallon with Glastonbury is probably post-pagan, and the names applied to Glastonbury—Avallon, *Insula Pomonum*, *Insula vitrea*—may be primitive names of Elysium. William of Malmesbury derives *Insula Pomonum* in its application to Glastonbury from a native name *Insula Avallonioe*, which he connects with the Brythonic *avalla*, "apples," because Glastenig found an apple tree there.<sup>[1201](#)</sup> The name may thus have been connected with marvellous apple trees, like those of the Irish Elysium. But he also suggests that it may be derived from the name of Avalloc, living there with his daughters. Avalloc is evidently the "Rex Avallon" (Avallach) to whose palace Arthur was carried and healed by the *regia virgo*.<sup>[1202](#)</sup> He may therefore have been a mythic lord of Elysium, and his daughters would correspond to the maidens of the isle. William also derives "Glastonbury" from the name of an eponymous founder Glastenig, or from its native name *Ynesuuitron*, "Glass Island." This name reappears in Chretien's *Eric* in the form "l'isle de verre." Giraldus explains the name from the glassy waters around Glastonbury, but it may be an early name of Elysium.<sup>[1203](#)</sup> Glass must have appealed to the imagination of Celt, Teuton,

and Slav, for we hear of Merlin's glass house, a glass fort discovered by Arthur, a glass tower attacked by the Milesians, Etain's glass *grianan*, and a boat of glass which conveyed Connla to Elysium. In Teutonic and Slavonic myth and *Märchen*, glass mountains, on which dwell mysterious personages, frequently occur.

The origin of the Celtic Elysium belief may be found in universal myths of a golden age long ago in some distant Elysian region, where men had lived with the gods. Into that region brave mortals might still penetrate, though it was lost to mankind as a whole. In some mythologies this Elysium is the land whither men go after death. Possibly the Celtic myth of man's early intercourse with the gods in a lost region took two forms. In one it was a joyful subterranean region whither the Celt hoped to go after death. In the other it was not recoverable, nor was it the land of the dead, but favoured mortals might reach it in life. The Celtic Elysium belief, as known through the tales just cited, is always of this second kind. We surmise, however, that the land of the dead was a joyous underworld ruled over by a god of fertility and of the dead, and from that region men had originally come forth. The later association of gods with the *síd* was a continuation of this belief, but now the *síd* are certainly not a land of the dead, but Elysium pure and simple. There must therefore have been at an early period a tendency to distinguish between the happy region of the dead, and the distant Elysium, if the two were ever really connected. The subject is obscure, but it is not impossible that another origin of the Elysium idea may be found in the phenomenon of the setting sun: it suggested to the continental Celts that far off there was a divine land where the sun-god rested. When the Celts reached the coast this divine western land would necessarily be located in a far-off island, seen perhaps on the horizon. Hence it would also be regarded as connected with the sea-god, Manannan, or by whatsoever name he was called. The distant Elysium, whether on land or across the sea, was conceived in identical terms, and hence also whenever the hollow hills or *síd* were regarded as an abode of the gods, they also were described just as Elysium was.



The idea of a world under the waters is common to many mythologies, and, generally speaking, it originated in the animistic belief that every part of nature has its indwelling spirits. Hence the spirits or gods of the waters were thought of as dwelling below the waters. Tales of supernatural beings appearing out of the waters, the custom of throwing offerings therein, the belief that human beings were carried below the surface or could live in the region beneath the waves, are all connected with this animistic idea. Among the Celts this water-world assumed many aspects of Elysium, and it has names in common with it, *e.g.* it is called Mag Mell. Hence in many popular tales it is hardly differentiated from the island Elysium; oversea and under-waves are often synonymous. Hence, too, the belief that such water-worlds as I-Bresail, or Welsh fairy-lands, or sunken cities off the Breton coast, rise periodically to the surface, and would remain there permanently, like an island Elysium, if some mortal would fulfil certain conditions.<sup>[1204](#)</sup>

The Celtic belief in *Tír fa Tonn* is closely connected with the current belief in submerged towns or lands, found in greatest detail on the Breton coast. Here there are many such legends, but most prominent are those which tell how the town of Is was submerged because of the wickedness of its people, or of Dahut, its king's daughter, who sometimes still seeks the love of mortals. It is occasionally seen below the waves or even on their surface.<sup>[1205](#)</sup> Elsewhere in Celtic regions similar legends are found, and the submersion is the result of a curse, of the breaking of a tabu, or of neglect to cover a sacred well.<sup>[1206](#)</sup> Probably the tradition of actual cataclysms or inroads of the sea, such as the Celts encountered on the coasts of Holland, may account for some of these legends, which then mingled with myths of the divine water-world.

The idea that Elysium is co-extensive with this world and hidden in a mist is perhaps connected with the belief in the magical powers of the gods. As the Druids could raise a mist at will, so too might the gods, who then created a temporary Elysium in it. From such a mist, usually on a hill, supernatural beings often emerged to meet mortals, and in *Märchen* fairyland is sometimes found within a mist.<sup>[1207](#)</sup> It was already believed that part of the gods' land was not far off; it was invisibly on or within the hills

on whose slopes men saw the mist swirling mysteriously. Hence the mist may simply have concealed the *síd* of the gods. But there may also have been a belief that this world was actually interpenetrated by the divine world, for this is believed of fairyland in Welsh and Irish folk-lore. Men may unwittingly interfere with it, or have it suddenly revealed to them, or be carried into it and made invisible.<sup>[1208](#)</sup>

In most of the tales Elysium is a land without grief or death, where there is immortal youth and peace, and every kind of delight. But in some, while the sensuous delights are still the same, the inhabitants are at war, invite the aid of mortals to overcome their foes, and are even slain in fight. Still in both groups Elysium is a land of gods and supernatural folk whither mortals are invited by favour. It is never the world of the dead; its people are not mortals who have died and gone thither. The two conceptions of Elysium as a land of peace and deathlessness, and as a land where war and death may occur, may both be primitive. The latter may have been formed by reflecting back on the divine world the actions of the world of mortals, and it would also be on a parallel with the conception of the world of the dead where warriors perhaps still fought, since they were buried with their weapons. There were also myths of gods warring with each other. But men may also have felt that the gods were not as themselves, that their land must be one of peace and deathlessness. Hence the idea of the peaceful Elysium, which perhaps found most favour with the people. Mr. Nutt thought that the idea of a warlike Elysium may have resulted from Scandinavian influence acting on existing tales of a peaceful Elysium,<sup>[1209](#)</sup> but we know that old myths of divine wars already existed. Perhaps this conception arose among the Celts as a warlike people, appealing to their warrior instincts, while the peaceful Elysium may have been the product of the Celts as an agricultural folk, for we have seen that the Celt was now a fighter, now a farmer. In its peaceful aspect Elysium is "a familiar, cultivated land," where the fruits of the earth are produced without labour, and where there are no storms or excess of heat or cold—the fancies which would appeal to a toiling, agricultural people. There food is produced magically, yet naturally, and in

agricultural ritual men sought to increase their food supply magically. In the tales this process is, so to speak, heightened.<sup>[1210](#)</sup>

Some writers have maintained that Elysium is simply the land of the dead, although nothing in the existing tales justifies this interpretation. M. D'Arbois argues for this view, resting his theory mainly on a passage in the story of Connla, interpreted by him in a way which does not give its real meaning.<sup>[1211](#)</sup> The words are spoken by the goddess to Connla, and their sense is—"The Ever-Living Ones invite thee. Thou art a champion to Tethra's people. They see thee every day in the assemblies of thy fatherland, among thy familiar loved ones."<sup>[1212](#)</sup> M. D'Arbois assumes that Tethra, a Fomorian, is lord of Elysium, and that after his defeat by the Tuatha Déa, he, like Kronos, took refuge there, and now reigns as lord of the dead. By translating *ar-dot-chiat* ("they see thee," 3rd plur., pres. ind.) as "on t'y verra," he maintains that Connla, by going to Elysium, will be seen among the gatherings of his dead kinsfolk. But the words, "Thou art a champion to Tethra's people," cannot be made to mean that Tethra is a god of the dead. It means simply that Connla is a mighty warrior, one of those whom Tethra, a war-god, would have approved. The phrase, "Tethra's mighty men," used elsewhere,<sup>[1213](#)</sup> is a conventional one for warriors. The rest of the goddess's words imply that the Immortals from afar, or perhaps "Tethra's mighty men," *i.e.* warriors in this world, see Connla in the assemblies of his fatherland in Erin, among his familiar friends. Dread death awaits *them*, she has just said, but the Immortals desire Connla to escape that by coming to Elysium. Her words do not imply that he will meet his dead ancestors there, nor is she in any sense a goddess of death. If the dead went to Elysium, there would be little need for inviting a living person to go there. Had Connla's dead ancestors or Tethra's people (warriors) been in Elysium, this would contradict the picture drawn by the goddess of the land whither she desires him to go—a land of women, not of men. Moreover, the rulers of Elysium are always members of the Tuatha Dé Danann or the *síd*-folk, never a Fomorian like Tethra.<sup>[1214](#)</sup>

M. D'Arbois also assumes that "Spain" in Nennius' account of the Irish invasions and in Irish texts means the land of the dead, and that it was

introduced in place of some such title as Mag Mór or Mag Mell by "the euhemerising process of the Irish Christians." But in other documents penned by Irish Christians these and other pagan titles of Elysium remain unchanged. Nor is there the slightest proof that the words used by Tuan MacCaraill about the invaders of Ireland, "They all died," were rendered in an original text, now lost according to M. D'Arbois, "They set sail for Mag Mór or Mag Mell," a formula in which Nennius saw indications of a return to Spain.<sup>1215</sup> Spain, in this hypothetical text, was the Land of the Dead or Elysium, whence the invaders came. This "lost original" exists in M. D'Arbois' imagination, and there is not the slightest evidence for these alterations. Once, indeed, Tailtiu is called daughter of Magh Mór, King of Spain, but here a person, not a place, is spoken of.<sup>1216</sup> Sir John Rhys accepts the identification of Spain with Elysium as the land of the dead, and finds in every reference to Spain a reference to the Other-world, which he regards as a region ruled by "dark divinities." But neither the lords of Elysium nor the Celtic Dispaters were dark or gloomy deities, and the land of the dead was certainly not a land of darkness any more than Elysium. The numerous references to Spain probably point to old traditions regarding a connection between Spain and Ireland in early times, both commercial and social, and it is not impossible that Goidelic invaders did reach Ireland from Spain.<sup>1217</sup> Early maps and geographers make Ireland and Spain contiguous; hence in an Irish tale Ireland is visible from Spain, and this geographical error would strengthen existing traditions.<sup>1218</sup> "Spain" was used vaguely, but it does not appear to have meant Elysium or the Land of the Dead. If it did, it is strange that the Tuatha Dé Danann are never brought into connection with it.

One of the most marked characteristics of the Celtic Elysium is its deathlessness. It is "the land of the living" or of "the Ever-Living Ones," and of eternal youth. Most primitive races believe that death is an accident befalling men who are naturally immortal; hence freedom from such an accident naturally characterises the people of the divine land. But, as in other mythologies, that immortality is more or less dependent on the eating or drinking of some food or drink of immortality. Manannan had immortal

swine, which, killed one day, came alive next day, and with their flesh he made the Tuatha Dé Danann immortal. Immortality was also conferred by the drinking of Goibniu's ale, which, either by itself or with the flesh of swine, formed his immortal feast. The food of Elysium was inexhaustible, and whoever ate it found it to possess that taste which he preferred. The fruit of certain trees in Elysium was also believed to confer immortality and other qualities. Laeg saw one hundred and fifty trees growing in Mag Mell; their nuts fed three hundred people. The apple given by the goddess to Connla was inexhaustible, and he was still eating it with her when Teigue, son of Cian, visited Elysium. "When once they had partaken of it, nor age nor dimness could affect them."<sup>1219</sup> Apples, crimson nuts, and rowan berries are specifically said to be the food of the gods in the tale of *Diarmaid and Grainne*. Through carelessness one of the berries was dropped on earth, and from it grew a tree, the berries of which had the effect of wine or mead, and three of them eaten by a man of a hundred years made him youthful. It was guarded by a giant.<sup>1220</sup> A similar tree growing on earth—a rowan guarded by a dragon, is found in the tale of Fraoch, who was bidden to bring a branch of it to Ailill. Its berries had the virtue of nine meals; they healed the wounded, and added a year to a man's life.<sup>1221</sup> At the wells which were the source of Irish rivers were supposed to grow hazel-trees with crimson nuts, which fell into the water and were eaten by salmon.<sup>1222</sup> If these were caught and eaten, the eater obtained wisdom and knowledge. These wells were in Erin, but in some instances the well with its hazels and salmon is in the Other-world,<sup>1223</sup> and it is obvious that the crimson nuts are the same as the food of the gods in *Diarmaid and Grainne*.

Why should immortality be dependent on the eating of certain foods? Most of man's irrational ideas have some reason in them, and probably man's knowledge that without food life would come to an end, joined to his idea of deathlessness, led him to believe that there was a certain food which produced immortality just as ordinary food supported life. On it gods and deathless beings were fed. Similarly, as water cleansed and invigorated, it was thought that some special kind of water had these powers in a marvellous degree. Hence arose the tales of the Fountain of Youth and the

belief in healing wells. From the knowledge of the nourishing power of food, sprang the idea that some food conferred the qualities inherent in it, *e.g.* the flesh of divine animals eaten sacramentally, and that gods obtained their immortality from eating or drinking. This idea is widespread. The Babylonian gods had food and water of Life; Egyptian myth spoke of the bread and beer of eternity which nourished the gods; the Hindus and Iranians knew of the divine *soma* or *haoma*; and in Scandinavian myth the gods renewed their youth by tasting Iduna's golden apples.

In Celtic Elysium tales, the fruit of a tree is most usually the food of immortality. The fruit never diminishes and always satisfies, and it is the food of the gods. When eaten by mortals it confers immortality upon them; in other words, it makes them of like nature to the gods, and this is doubtless derived from the widespread idea that the eating of food given by a stranger makes a man of one kin with him. Hence to eat the food of gods, fairies, or of the dead, binds the mortal to them and he cannot leave their land. This might be illustrated from a wide range of myth and folk-belief. When Connla ate the apple he at once desired to go to Elysium, and he could not leave it once he was there; he had become akin to its people. In the stories of Bran and Oisín, they are not said to have eaten such fruit, but the primitive form of the tales may have contained this incident, and this would explain why they could not set foot on earth unscathed, and why Bran and his followers, or, in the tale of Fiachna, Loegaire and his men who had drunk the ale of Elysium, returned thither. In other tales, it is true, those who eat food in Elysium can return to earth—Cormac and Cúchulainn; but had we the primitive form of these tales we should probably find that they had refrained from eating. The incident of the fruit given by an immortal to a mortal may have borrowed something from the wide folk-custom of the presentation of an apple as a gage of love or as a part of the marriage rite.<sup>1224</sup> Its acceptance denotes willingness to enter upon betrothal or marriage. But as in the Roman rite of *confarreatio* with its savage parallels, the underlying idea is probably that which has just been considered, namely, that the giving and acceptance of food produces the bond of kinship.



As various nuts and fruits were prized in Ireland as food, and were perhaps used in some cases to produce an intoxicant,<sup>1225</sup> it is evident that the trees of Elysium were, primarily, a magnified form of earthly trees. But all such trees were doubtless objects of a cult before their produce was generally eaten; they were first sacred or totem-trees, and their food eaten only occasionally and sacramentally. If so, this would explain why they grew in Elysium and their fruit was the food of the gods. For whatever man eats or drinks is generally supposed to have been first eaten and drunk by the gods, like the *soma*. But, growing in Elysium, these trees, like the trees of most myths of Elysium, are far more marvellous than any known on earth. They have branches of silver and golden apples; they have magical supplies of fruit, they produce wonderful music which sometimes causes sleep or oblivion; and birds perch in their branches and warble melody "such that the sick would sleep to it." It should be noted also that, as Miss Hull points out, in some tales the branch of a divine tree becomes a talisman leading the mortal to Elysium; in this resembling the golden bough plucked by Æneas before visiting the underworld.<sup>1226</sup> This, however, is not the fundamental characteristic of the tree, in Irish story. Possibly, as Mr. A.B. Cook maintains, the branch giving entrance to Elysium is derived from the branch borne by early Celtic kings of the wood, while the tree is an imaginative form of those which incarnated a vegetation spirit.<sup>1227</sup> Be this as it may, it is rather the fruit eaten by the mortal which binds him to the Immortal Land.

The inhabitants of Elysium are not only immortal, but also invisible at will. They make themselves visible to one person only out of many present with him. Connla alone sees the goddess, invisible to his father and the Druid. Mananuan is visible to Bran, but there are many near the hero whom he does not see; and when the same god comes to Fand, he is invisible to Cúchulainn and those with him. So Mider says to Etain, "We behold, and are not beheld."<sup>1228</sup> Occasionally, too, the people of Elysium have the power of shape-shifting—Fand and Liban appear to Cúchulainn as birds.

The hazel of knowledge connects wisdom with the gods' world, and in Celtic belief generally civilisation and culture were supposed to have come



from the gods. The things of their land were coveted by men, and often stolen thence by them. In Welsh and Irish tales, often with reference to the Other-world, a magical cauldron has a prominent place. Dagda possessed such a cauldron and it was inexhaustible, and a vat of inexhaustible mead is described in the story of *Cúchulain's Sickness*. Whatever was put into such cauldrons satisfied all, no matter how numerous they might be.<sup>[1229](#)</sup> Cúchulainn obtained one from the daughter of the king of Scath, and also carried off the king's three cows.<sup>[1230](#)</sup> In an analogous story, he stole from Cúroi, by the connivance of his wife Bláthnat, her father Mider's cauldron, three cows, and the woman herself. But in another version Cúchulainn and Cúroi go to Mider's stronghold in the Isle of Falga (Elysium), and steal cauldron, cows, and Bláthnat. These were taken from Cúchulainn by Cúroi; hence his revenge as in the previous tale.<sup>[1231](#)</sup> Thus the theft was from Elysium. In the Welsh poem "The Spoils of Annwfn," Arthur stole a cauldron from Annwfn. Its rim was encrusted with pearls, voices issued from it, it was kept boiling by the breath of nine maidens, and it would not boil a coward's food.<sup>[1232](#)</sup>

As has been seen from the story of Gwion, he was set to watch a cauldron which must boil until it yielded "three drops of the grace of inspiration." It belonged to Tegid Voel and Cerridwen, divine rulers of a Land under the Waters.<sup>[1233](#)</sup> In the *Mabinogi* of Branwen, her brother Bran received a cauldron from two beings, a man and a huge woman, who came from a lake. This cauldron was given by him to the king of Erin, and it had the property of restoring to life the slain who were placed in it.<sup>[1234](#)</sup>

The three properties of the cauldron—inexhaustibility, inspiration, and regeneration—may be summed up in one word, fertility; and it is significant that the god with whom such a cauldron was associated, Dagda, was a god of fertility. But we have just seen it associated, directly or indirectly, with goddesses—Cerridwen, Branwen, the woman from the lake—and perhaps this may point to an earlier cult of goddesses of fertility, later transferred to gods. In this light the cauldron's power of restoring to life is significant, since in early belief life is associated with what is feminine. Woman as the fruitful mother suggested that the Earth, which produced and nourished,

was also female. Hence arose the cult of the Earth-mother who was often also a goddess of love as well as of fertility. Cerridwen, in all probability, was a goddess of fertility, and Branwen a goddess of love.<sup>1235</sup> The cult of fertility was usually associated with orgiastic and indiscriminate love-making, and it is not impossible that the cauldron, like the Hindu *yonī*, was a symbol of fertility.<sup>1236</sup> Again, the slaughter and cooking of animals was usually regarded as a sacred act in primitive life. The animals were cooked in enormous cauldrons, which were found as an invariable part of the furniture of every Celtic house.<sup>1237</sup> The quantities of meat which they contained may have suggested inexhaustibility to people to whom the cauldron was already a symbol of fertility. Thus the symbolic cauldron of a fertility cult was merged with the cauldron used in the religious slaughter and cooking of animal food. The cauldron was also used in ritual. The Cimri slaughtered human victims over a cauldron and filled it with their blood; victims sacrificed to Teutates were suffocated in a vat (*semicupium*); and in Ireland "a cauldron of truth" was used in the ordeal of boiling water.<sup>1238</sup> Like the food of men which was regarded as the food of the gods, the cauldron of this world became the marvellous cauldron of the Other-world, and as it then became necessary to explain the origin of such cauldrons on earth, myths arose, telling how they had been stolen from the divine land by adventurous heroes, Cúchulainn, Arthur, etc. In other instances, the cauldron is replaced by a magic vessel or cup stolen from supernatural beings by heroes of the Fionn saga or of *Märchen*.<sup>1239</sup> Here, too, it may be noted that the Graal of Arthurian romance has affinities with the Celtic cauldron. In the *Conte du Graal* of pseudo-Chrétien, a cup comes in of itself and serves all present with food. This is a simple conception of the Graal, but in other poems its magical and sacrosanct character is heightened. It supplies the food which the eater prefers, it gives immortal youth and immunity from wounds. In these respects it presents an unmistakable likeness to the cauldron of Celtic myth. But, again, it was the vessel in which Christ had instituted the Blessed Sacrament; it contained His Blood; and it had been given by our Lord to Joseph of Arimathea. Thus in the Graal there was a fusion of the magic cauldron of Celtic paganism

and the Sacred Chalice of Christianity, with the product made mystic and glorious in a most wonderful manner. The story of the Graal became immensely popular, and, deepening in ethical, mystical, and romantic import as time went on, was taken up by one poet after another, who "used it as a type of the loftiest goal of man's effort."<sup>1240</sup>

In other ways myth told how the gifts of civilisation came from the gods' world. When man came to domesticate animals, it was believed in course of time that the knowledge of domestication or, more usually, the animals themselves had come from the gods, only, in this case, the animals were of a magical, supernatural kind. Such a belief underlies the stories in which Cúchulainn steals cows from their divine owners. In other instances, heroes who obtain a wife from the *síd*-folk, obtain also cattle from the *síd*.<sup>1241</sup> As has been seen the swine given to Pryderi by Arawn, king of Annwfn, and hitherto unknown to man, are stolen from him by Gwydion, Pryderi being son of Pwyll, a temporary king of Annwfn, and in all probability both were lords of Elysium. The theft, in the original form of the myth, must thus have been from Elysium, though we have a hint in "The Spoils of Annwfn" that Gwydion (Gweir) was unsuccessful and was imprisoned in Annwfn, to which imprisonment the later blending of Annwfn with hell gave a doleful aspect.<sup>1242</sup> In a late Welsh MS., a white roebuck and a puppy (or, in the *Triads*, a bitch, a roebuck, and a lapwing) were stolen by Amæthon from Annwfn, and the story presents archaic features.<sup>1243</sup> In some of these tales the animals are transferred to earth by a divine or semi-divine being, in whom we may see an early Celtic culture-hero. The tales are attenuated forms of older myths which showed how all domestic animals were at first the property of the gods, and an echo of these is still heard in *Märchen* describing the theft of cattle from fairyland. In the most primitive form of the tales the theft was doubtless from the underworld of gods of fertility, the place whither the dead went. But with the rise of myths telling of a distant Elysium, it was inevitable that some tales should connect the animals and the theft with that far-off land. So far as the Irish and Welsh tales are concerned, the thefts seem mainly to be from Elysium.<sup>1244</sup>

Love-making has a large place in the Elysium tales. Goddesses seek the love of mortals, and the mortal desires to visit Elysium because of their enticements. But the love-making of Elysium is "without sin, without crime," and this phrase may perhaps suggest the existence of ritual sex-unions at stated times for magical influence upon the fertility of the earth, these unions not being regarded as immoral, even when they trespassed on customary tribal law. In some of the stories Elysium is composed of many islands, one of which is the "island of women."<sup>1245</sup> These women and their queen give their favours to Bran and his men or to Maelduin and his company. Similar "islands of women" occur in *Märchen*, still current among Celtic peoples, and actual islands were or still are called by that name—Eigg and Groagez off the Breton coast.<sup>1246</sup> Similar islands of women are known to Chinese, Japanese, and Ainu folk-lore, to Greek mythology (Circe's and Calypso's islands), and to ancient Egyptian conceptions of the future life.<sup>1247</sup> They were also known elsewhere,<sup>1248</sup> and we may therefore assume that in describing such an island as part of Elysium, the Celts were using something common to universal folk-belief. But it may also owe something to actual custom, to the memory of a time when women performed their rites in seclusion, a seclusion perhaps recalled in the references to the mysterious nature of the island, its inaccessibility, and its disappearance once the mortal leaves it. To these rites men may have been admitted by favour, but perhaps to their detriment, because of their temporary partner's extreme erotic madness. This is the case in the Chinese tales of the island of women, and this, rather than home-sickness, may explain the desire of Bran, Oisín, etc., to leave Elysium. Celtic women performed orgiastic rites on islands, as has been seen.<sup>1249</sup> All this may have originated the belief in an island of beautiful divine women as part of Elysium, while it also heightened its sensuous aspect.

Borrowed from the delight which the Celt took in music is the recurring reference to the marvellous music which swelled in Elysium. There, as the goddess says to Bran, "there is nothing rough or harsh, but sweet music striking on the ear." It sounded from birds on every tree, from the branches of trees, from marvellous stones, and from the harps of divine musicians.

And this is recalled in the ravishing music which the belated traveller hears as he passes fairy-haunted spots—"what pipes and timbrels, what wild ecstasy!" The romantic beauty of Elysium is described in these Celtic tales in a way unequalled in all other sagas or *Märchen*, and it is insisted on by those who come to lure mortals there. The beauty of its landscapes—hills, white cliffs, valleys, sea and shore, lakes and rivers,—of its trees, its inhabitants, and its birds,—the charm of its summer haze, is obviously the product of the imagination of a people keenly alive to natural beauty. The opening lines sung by the goddess to Bran strike a note which sounds through all Celtic literature:

"There is a distant isle, around which sea-horses glisten,  
...  
A beauty of a wondrous land, whose aspects are lovely,  
Whose view is a fair country, incomparable in its haze.  
It is a day of lasting weather, that showers silver on the land;  
A pure white cliff on the range of the sea,  
Which from the sun receives its heat."

So Oisín describes it: "I saw a country all green and full of flowers, with beautiful smooth plains, blue hills, and lakes and waterfalls." All this and more than this is the reflection of nature as it is found in Celtic regions, and as it was seen by the eye of Celtic dreamers, and interpreted to a poetic race by them.

In Irish accounts of the *síd*, Dagda has the supremacy, wrested later from him by Óengus, but generally each owner of a *síd* is its lord. In Welsh tradition Arawn is lord of Annwfn, but his claims are contested by a rival, and other lords of Elysium are known. Manannan, a god of the sea, appears to be lord of the Irish island Elysium which is called "the land of Manannan," perhaps because it was easy to associate an overseas world "around which sea-horses glisten" with a god whose mythic steeds were the waves. But as it lay towards the sunset, and as some of its aspects may have

been suggested by the glories of the setting sun, the sun-god Lug was also associated with it, though he hardly takes the place of Manannan.

Most of the aspects of Elysium appear unchanged in later folk-belief, but it has now become fairyland—a place within hills, mounds, or *síd*, of marvellous beauty, with magic properties, and where time lapses as in a dream. A wonderful oversea land is also found in *Märchen* and tradition, and Tír na n-Og is still a living reality to the Celt. There is the fountain of youth, healing balsams, life-giving fruits, beautiful women or fairy folk. It is the true land of heart's desire. In the eleventh century MSS. from which our knowledge of Elysium is mainly drawn, but which imply a remote antiquity for the materials and ideas of the tales, the *síd*-world is still the world of divine beings, though these are beginning to assume the traits of fairies. Probably among the people themselves the change had already begun to be made, and the land of the gods was simply fairyland. In Wales the same change had taken place, as is seen by Giraldus' account of Elidurus enticed to a subterranean fairyland by two small people.<sup>[1250](#)</sup>

Some of the Elysium tales have been influenced by Christian conceptions, and in a certain group, the *Imrama* or "Voyages," Elysium finally becomes the Christian paradise or heaven. But the Elysium conception also reacted on Christian ideas of paradise. In the *Voyage of Maelduin*, which bears some resemblance to the story of Bran, the Christian influence is still indefinite, but it is more marked in the *Voyage of Snedgus and MacRiagla*. One island has become a kind of intermediate state, where dwell Enoch and Elijah, and many others waiting for the day of judgment. Another island resembles the Christian heaven. But in the *Voyage of Brandan* the pagan elements have practically disappeared; there is an island of hell and an island of paradise.<sup>[1251](#)</sup> The island conception is the last relic of paganism, but now the voyage is undertaken for the purpose of revenge or penance or pilgrimage. Another series of tales of visionary journeys to hell or heaven are purely Christian, yet the joys of heaven have a sensuous aspect which recalls those of the pagan Elysium. In one of these, *The Tidings of Doomsday*,<sup>[1252](#)</sup> there are two hells, and besides heaven there is a place for the *boni non valde*, resembling the island of Enoch and Elijah in

the *Voyage of Snedgus*. The connection of Elysium with the Christian paradise is seen in the title *Tír Tairngiri*, "The Land of Promise," which is applied to the heavenly kingdom or the land flowing with milk and honey in early glosses, e.g. on Heb. iv. 4, vi. 15, where Canaan and the *regnum coelorum* are called *Tír Tairngiri*, and in a gloss to 1 Cor. x. 4, where the heavenly land is called *Tír Tairngiri Innambéo*, "The Land of Promise of the Living Ones," thus likening it to the "Land of the Living" in the story of Connla.

Sensuous as many of the aspects of Elysium are, they have yet a spiritual aspect which must not be overlooked. The emphasis placed on its beauty, its music, its rest and peace, its oblivion, is spiritual rather than sensual, while the dwelling of favoured mortals there with divine beings is suggestive of that union with the divine which is the essence of all religion. Though men are lured to seek it, they do not leave it, or they go back to it after a brief absence, and Laeg says that he would prefer Elysium to the kingship of all Ireland, and his words are echoed by others. And the lure of the goddess often emphasises the freedom from turmoil, grief, and the rude alarms of earthly life. This "sweet and blessed country" is described with all the passion of a poetical race who dreamed of perfect happiness, and saw in the joy of nature's beauty, the love of women, and the thought of unbroken peace and harmony, no small part of man's truest life. Favoured mortals had reached Elysium, and the hope that he, too, might be so favoured buoyed up the Celt as he dreamed over this state, which was so much more blissful even than the future state of the dead. Many races have imagined a happy Other-world, but no other race has so filled it with magic beauty, or so persistently recurred to it as the Celts. They stood on the cliffs which faced the west, and as the pageant of sunset passed before them, or as at midday the light shimmered on the far horizon and on shadowy islands, they gazed with wistful eyes as if to catch a glimpse of Elysium beyond the fountains of the deep and the halls of the setting sun. In all this we see the Celtic version of a primitive and instinctive human belief. Man refuses to think that the misery and disappointment and strife and pain of life must always



be his. He hopes and believes that there is reserved for him, somewhere and at some time, eternal happiness and eternal love.

[1179](#). Nutt-Meyer, i. 213.

[1180](#). Joyce, *OCR* 431.

[1181](#). D'Arbois, ii. 311; *IT* i. 113 f.; O'Curry, *MC* iii. 190.

[1182](#). Nutt-Meyer, i. 1 f., text and translation.

[1183](#). *LU* 120a; Windisch, *Irische Gramm.* 120 f.; D'Arbois, v. 384 f.; *Gaelic Journal*, ii. 307.

[1184](#). *TOS* iv. 234. See also Joyce, *OCR* 385; Kennedy, 240.

[1185](#). *LU* 43 f.; *IT* i. 205 f.; O'Curry, *Atlantis*, ii., iii.; D'Arbois, v. 170; Leahy, i. 60 f.

[1186](#). "From Manannan came foes."

[1187](#). Joyce, *OCR* 223 f.

[1188](#). O'Grady, ii. 290. In this story the sea is identified with Fiachna's wife.

[1189](#). Joyce, *OCR* 253 f.

[1190](#). *IT* iii. 211 f.; D'Arbois, ii. 185.

[1191](#). O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* 388.

[1192](#). A similar idea occurs in many Fian tales.

[1193](#). Evans, *Welsh Dict.* s.v. "Annwfn"; Anwyl, 60; Gaidoz, *ZCP* i. 29 f.

[1194](#). Loth, i. 27 f.; see p. 111, *supra*.

[1195](#). Pp. 106, 112, *supra*.

[1196](#). Guest, iii. 75; Loth, i. 29 f.

[1197](#). Skene, i. 264, 276. Cf. the *Ille tournoient* of the Graal romances and the revolving houses of *Märchen*. A revolving rampart occurs in "Maelduin" (*RC* x. 81).

[1198](#). Skene, i. 285.

[1199](#). Pp. 103, 116, *supra*.

[1200](#). Chretien, *Eric*, 1933 f.; Geoffrey, *Vita Merlini*, 41; San Marte, *Geoffrey*, 425. Another Irish Liban is called Muirgen, which is the same as Morgen. See Girald. *Cambr. Spec. Eccl.* Rolls Series, iv. 48.

[1201](#). William of Malmesbury, *de Ant. Glaston. Eccl.*

[1202](#). San Marte, 425.

[1203](#). *Op. cit.* iv. 49.

[1204](#). Joyce, *OCR* 434; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* i. 170; Hardiman, *Irish Minst.* i. 367; Sébillot, ii. 56 f.; Girald. *Cambr.* ii. 12. The underworld is sometimes reached through a well (cf. p. 282, *supra*; *TI* iii.

209).

[1205.](#) *Le Braz*<sup>2</sup>, i. p. xxxix, ii. 37 f.; Albert le Grand, *Vies de Saints de Bretagne*, 63.

[1206.](#) A whole class of such Irish legends is called *Tomhadna*, "Inundations." A typical instance is that of the town below Lough Neagh, already referred to by Giraldus Cambrensis, *Top. Hib.* ii. 9; cf. a Welsh instance in *Itin. Cambr.* i. 2. See Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL*, *passim*; Kennedy, 282; *Rev. des Trad. Pop.* ix. 79.

[1207.](#) *Scott. Celt. Rev.* i. 70; Campbell, *WHT* Nos. 38, 52; Loth, i. 38.

[1208.](#) Curtin, *Tales*, 158; Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *CFL* i. 230.

[1209.](#) Nutt-Meyer, i. 159.

[1210.](#) In the Vedas, Elysium has also a strong agricultural aspect, probably for the same reasons.

[1211.](#) D'Arbois, ii. 119, 192, 385, vi. 197, 219; *RC* xxvi. 173; *Les Druides*, 121.

[1212.](#) For the text see Windisch, *Ir. Gram.* 120: "Totchurethar bii bithbi at gérait do dáinib Tethrach. ar-dot-chiat each dia i n-dálaib tathardai eter dugnathu inmaini." Dr. Stokes and Sir John Rh<sup>^</sup>ys have both privately confirmed the interpretation given above.

[1213.](#) "Dialogue of the Sages," *RC* xxvi. 33 f.

[1214.](#) Tethra was husband of the war-goddess Badb, and in one text his name is glossed *badb* (Cormac, s.v. "Tethra"). The name is also glossed *muir*, "sea," by O'Cleary, and the sea is called "the plain of Tethra" (*Arch. Rev.* i. 152). These obscure notices do not necessarily denote that he was ruler of an oversea Elysium.

[1215.](#) Nennius, *Hist. Brit.* § 13; D'Arbois, ii. 86, 134, 231.

[1216.](#) *LL* 8b; Keating, 126.

[1217.](#) Both art *motifs* and early burial customs in the two countries are similar. See Reinach, *RC* xxi. 88; *L'Anthropologie*, 1889, 397; Siret, *Les Première Ages du Metal dans le Sud. Est. de l'Espagne*.

[1218.](#) Orosius, i. 2. 71; *LL* 11b.

[1219.](#) D'Arbois, v. 384; O'Grady, ii. 385.

[1220.](#) *TOS* iii. 119; Joyce, *OCR* 314. For a folk-tale version see *Folk-lore*, vii. 321.

[1221.](#) Leahy, i. 36; Campbell, *LF* 29; *CM* xiii. 285; *Dean of Lismore's Book*, 54.

[1222.](#) O'Curry, *MC* ii. 143; Cormac, 35.

[1223.](#) See p. 187, *supra*; *IT* iii. 213.

[1224.](#) See Gaidoz, "La Requisition de l'Amour et la Symbolisme de la Pomme," *Ann. de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études*, 1902; Fraser, *Pausanias*, iii. 67.

[1225.](#) Rh<sup>^</sup>ys, *HL* 359.

[1226.](#) "The Silver Bough in Irish Legend," *Folk-Lore*, xii. 431.

[1227.](#) Cook, *Folk-Lore*, xvii. 158.

[1228.](#) *IT* i. 133.

[1229.](#) O'Donovan, *Battle of Mag Rath*, 50; D'Arbois, v. 67; *IT* i. 96. Dagda's cauldron came from Murias, probably an oversea world.

[1230.](#) Miss Hull, 244. Scath is here the Other-world, conceived, however, as a dismal abode.

[1231.](#) O'Curry, *MC* ii. 97, iii. 79; Keating, 284 f.; *RC* xv. 449.

[1232.](#) Skene, i. 264; cf. *RC* xxii. 14.

[1233.](#) P. 116, *supra*.

[1234.](#) Guest, iii. 321 f.

[1235.](#) See pp. 103, 117, *supra*.

[1236.](#) For the use of a vessel in ritual as a symbol of deity, see Crooke, *Folk-Lore*, viii. 351 f.

[1237.](#) Diod. Sic. v. 28; Athen. iv. 34; Joyce, *SH* ii. 124; *Antient Laws of Ireland*, iv. 327. The cauldrons of Irish houses are said in the texts to be inexhaustible (cf. *RC* xxiii. 397).

[1238.](#) Strabo, vii. 2. 1; Lucan, Usener's ed., p. 32; *IT* iii. 210; *Antient Laws of Ireland*, i. 195 f.

[1239.](#) Curtin, *HTI* 249, 262.

[1240.](#) See Villemarqu , *Contes Pop. des anciens Bretons*, Paris, 1842; Rh ys, *AL*; and especially Nutt, *Legend of the Holy Grail*, 1888.

[1241.](#) "Adventures of Nera," *RC* x. 226; *RC* xvi. 62, 64.

[1242.](#) P. 106, *supra*.

[1243.](#) P. 107, *supra*.

[1244.](#) For parallel myths see *Rig-Veda*, i. 53. 2; Campbell, *Travels in South Africa*, i. 306; Johnston, *Uganda Protectorate*, ii. 704; Ling Roth, *Natives of Sarawak*, i. 307; and cf. the myth of Prometheus.

[1245.](#) This is found in the stories of Bran, Maelduin, Connla, in Fian tales (O'Grady, ii. 228, 238), in the "Children of Tuirenn," and in Gaelic *M rchen*.

[1246.](#) Martin, 277; S billot, ii. 76.

[1247.](#) Burton, *Thousand Nights and a Night*, x. 239; Chamberlain, *Aino Folk-Tales*, 38; *L'Anthropologie*, v. 507; Maspero, *Hist. anc. des peuples de l'Orient*, i. 183. The lust of the women of these islands is fatal to their lovers.

[1248.](#) An island near New Guinea is called "the land of women." On it men are allowed to land temporarily, but only the female offspring of the women are allowed to survive (*L'Anthrop.* v. 507). The Indians of Florida had a tradition of an island in a lake inhabited by the fairest women (Chateaubriand, *Autob.* 1824, ii. 24), and Fijian mythology knows of an Elysian island of goddesses, near the land of the gods, to which a few favoured mortals are admitted (Williams, *Fiji*, i. 114).

[1249.](#) P. 274, *supra*. Islands may have been regarded as sacred because of such cults, as the folk-lore reported by Plutarch suggests (p. 343, *supra*). Celtic saints retained the veneration for islands,

and loved to dwell on them, and the idea survives in folk-belief. Cf. the veneration of Lewismen for the Flannan islands.

[1250.](#) Gir. Camb. *Itin. Camb.* i. 8.

[1251.](#) Translations of some of these *Voyages* by Stokes are given in *RC*, vols. ix. x. and xiv. See also Zimmer, "Brendan's Meerfahrt," *Zeits. für Deut. Alt.* xxxiii.; cf. Nutt-Meyer, ch. 4, 8.

[1252.](#) *RC* iv. 243.

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## **Preface**

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During the years 1907–9 this study first took shape, being then based mainly on literary sources; and during the latter year it was successfully presented to the Faculty of Letters of the University of Rennes, Brittany, for

the Degree of *Docteur-ès-Lettres*. Since then I have re-investigated the whole problem of the Celtic belief in Fairies, and have collected very much fresh material. Two years ago the scope of my original research was limited to the four chief Celtic countries, but now it includes all of the Celtic countries.

In the present study, which has profited greatly by criticisms of the first passed by scholars in Britain and in France, the original literary point of view is combined with the broader point of view of anthropology. This study, the final and more comprehensive form of my views about the 'Fairy-Faith', would never have been possible had I not enjoyed during many months the kindly advice and constant encouragement of Mr. R. R. Marett, Reader in Social Anthropology in the University of Oxford, and Fellow of Exeter College.

During May 1910 the substance of this essay in its pan-Celtic form was submitted to the Board of the Faculty of Natural Science of Oxford University for the Research Degree of Bachelor of Science, which was duly granted. But the present work contains considerable material not contained in the essay presented to the Oxford examiners, the Right Hon. Sir John Rhys and Mr. Andrew Lang; and, therefore, I alone assume entire responsibility for all its possible shortcomings, and in particular for some of its more speculative theories, which to some minds may appear to be in conflict with orthodox views, whether of the theologian or of the man of science. These theories, however venturesome they may appear, are put forth in almost every case with the full approval of some reliable, scholarly Celt; and as such they are chiefly intended to make the exposition of the belief in fairies as completely and as truly Celtic as possible, without much regard for non-Celtic opinion, whether this be in harmony with Celtic opinion or not.

As the new manuscript of the 'Fairy-Faith' lies before me revised and finished, I realize even more fully than I did two years ago with respect to the original study, how little right I have to call it mine. Those to whom the credit for it really belongs are my many kind friends and helpers in Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany, and many others who

are not Celts, in the three great nations—happily so intimately united now by unbreakable bonds of goodwill and international brotherhood—Britain, France, and the United States of America; for without the aid of all these Celtic and non-Celtic friends the work could never have been accomplished. They have given me their best and rarest thoughts as so many golden threads; I have only furnished the mental loom, and woven these golden threads together in my own way according to what I take to be the psychological pattern of the *Fairy-Faith*.

I am under a special obligation to the following six distinguished Celtic scholars who have contributed, for my second chapter, the six introductions to the fairy-lore collected by me in their respective countries:—Dr. Douglas Hyde (Ireland); Dr. Alexander Carmichael (Scotland); Miss Sophia Morrison (Isle of Man); the Right Hon. Sir John Rhÿs (Wales); Mr. Henry Jenner (Cornwall); Professor Anatole Le Braz (Brittany).

I am also greatly indebted to the Rev. J. Estlin Carpenter, Principal of Manchester College, for having aided me with the parts of this book touching Christian theology; to Mr. R. I. Best, M.R.I.A., Assistant Librarian, National Library, Dublin, for having aided me with the parts devoted to Irish mythology and literature; and to Mr. William McDougall, Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy in the University of Oxford, for a similar service with respect to Section IV, entitled ‘Science and Fairies’. And to these and to all the other scholars whose names appear in this preface, my heartiest thanks are due for the assistance which they have so kindly rendered in reading different parts of the *Fairy-Faith* when in proof.

With the deep spirit of reverence which a student feels towards his preceptors, I acknowledge a still greater debt to those among my friends and helpers who have been my Celtic guides and teachers. Here in Oxford University I have run up a long account with the Right Hon. Sir John Rhÿs, the Professor of Celtic, who has introduced me to the study of Modern Irish, and of Arthurian romance and mythology, and has guided me both during the year 1907–8 and ever since in Celtic folk-lore generally. To Mr. Andrew Lang, I am likewise a debtor, more especially in view of the important suggestions which he has given me during the past two years with respect to



anthropology and to psychical research. In my relation to the Faculty of Letters of the University of Rennes, I shall always remember the friendly individual assistance offered to me there during the year 1908–9 by Professor Joseph Loth, then Dean in that University, but now of the College of France, in Paris, particularly with respect to Brythonic mythology, philology, and archaeology; by Professor Georges Dottin, particularly with respect to Gaelic matters; and by Professor Anatole Le Braz, whose continual good wishes towards my work have been a constant source of inspiration since our first meeting during March 1908, especially in my investigation of *La Légende de la Mort*, and of the related traditions and living folk-beliefs in Brittany—Brittany with its haunted ground of Carnac, home of the ancient Brythonic Mysteries.

W. Y. E. W.

Jesus College, Oxford.  
*All Saints' Day*, 1911.

‘There, neither turmoil nor silence....

‘Though fair the sight of Erin’s plains, hardly will they seem  
so after you have known the Great Plain....

‘A wonder of a land the land of which I speak; no youth  
there grows to old age....

‘We behold and are not beheld.’—The God Midir, in  
*Tochmarc Etaine*.

## Introduction

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‘I have told what I have seen, what I have thought, and what  
I have learned by inquiry.’—HERODOTUS.

## **I. The Religious Nature of the Fairy-Faith**

There is probably no other place in Celtic lands more congenial, or more inspiring for the writing down of one's deeper intuitions about the Fairy-Faith, than Carnac, under the shadow of the pagan tumulus and mount of the sacred fire, now dedicated by triumphant Christianity to the Archangel Michael. The very name of Carnac is significant;<sup>1</sup> and in two continents, Africa and Europe—to follow the certain evidence of archaeology alone<sup>2</sup>—there seem to have been no greater centres for ancient religion than Karnak in Egypt and Carnac in Brittany. On the banks of the Nile the Children of Isis and Osiris erected temples as perfect as human art can make them; on the shores of the Morbihan the mighty men who were, as it seems, the teachers of our own Celtic forefathers, erected temples of unhewn stone. The wonderful temples in Yucatan, the temple-caves of prehistoric India, Stonehenge in England, the Parthenon, the Acropolis, St. Peter's at Rome, Westminster Abbey, or Notre-Dame, and the Pyramids and temples of Egypt, equally with the Alignements of Carnac, each in their own way record more or less perfectly man's attempt to express materially what he feels spiritually. Perfected art can beautify and make more attractive to the eye and mind, but it cannot enhance in any degree the innate spiritual ideals which men in all ages have held; and thus it is that we read amid the rough stone menhirs and dolmens in Brittany, as amid the polished granite monoliths and magnificent temples in Egypt, the same silent message from the past to the present, from the dead to the living. This message, we think, is fundamentally important in understanding the Celtic Fairy-Faith; for in our opinion the belief in fairies has the same origin as all religions and mythologies.

And there seems never to have been an uncivilized tribe, a race, or nation of civilized men who have not had some form of belief in an unseen world, peopled by unseen beings. In religions, mythologies, and the Fairy-Faith, too, we behold the attempts which have been made by different

peoples in different ages to explain in terms of human experience this unseen world, its inhabitants, its laws, and man's relation to it. The Ancients called its inhabitants gods, genii, daemons, and shades; Christianity knows them as angels, saints, demons, and souls of the dead; to uncivilized tribes they are gods, demons, and spirits of ancestors; and the Celts think of them as gods, and as fairies of many kinds.

## **II. The Interpretation of the Fairy-Faith**

By the Celtic Fairy-Faith we mean that specialized form of belief in a spiritual realm inhabited by spiritual beings which has existed from prehistoric times until now in Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, or other parts of the ancient empire of the Celts. In studying this belief, we are concerned directly with living Celtic folk-traditions, and with past Celtic folk-traditions as recorded in literature. And if fairies actually exist as invisible beings or intelligences, and our investigations lead us to the tentative hypothesis that they do, they are natural and not supernatural, for nothing which exists can be supernatural; and, therefore, it is our duty to examine the Celtic Fairy Races just as we examine any fact in the visible realm wherein we now live, whether it be a fact of chemistry, of physics, or of biology. However, as we proceed to make such an examination, we shall have to remember constantly that there is a new set of ideas to work with, entirely different from what we find in natural sciences, and often no adequate vocabulary based on common human experiences. An American who has travelled in Asia and an Englishman who has travelled in Australia may meet in Paris and exchange travelling experiences with mutual understanding, because both of them have experienced travel; and they will have an adequate vocabulary to describe each experience, because most men have also experienced travel. But a saint who has known the spiritual condition called ecstasy cannot explain ecstasy to a man who has never known it, and if he should try to do so would discover at once that no modern language is suitable for the

purpose. His experience is rare and not universal, and men have developed no complete vocabulary to describe experiences not common to the majority of mankind, and this is especially true of psychical experiences. It is the same in dealing with fairies, as these are hypothetically conceived, for only a few men and women can assert that they have seen fairies, and hence there is no adequate vocabulary to describe fairies. Among the Ancients, who dealt so largely with psychical sciences, there seems to have been a common language which could be used to explain the invisible world and its inhabitants; but we of this age have not yet developed such a language. Consequently, men who deny human immortality, as well as men with religious faith who have not through personal psychical experiences transformed that faith into a fact, nowadays when they happen to read what Plato, Iamblichus, or any of the Neo-Platonists have written, or even what moderns have written in attempting to explain psychic facts, call it all mysticism. And to the great majority of Europeans and Americans, mysticism is a most convenient noun, applicable to anything which may seem reasonable yet wholly untranslatable in terms of their own individual experience; and mysticism usually means something quite the reverse of scientific simply because we have by usage unwisely limited the meaning of the word *science* to a knowledge of things material and visible, whereas it really means a knowing or a knowledge of everything which exists. We have tried to deal with the rare psychical experiences of Irish, Scotch, Manx, Welsh, or Breton seers, and psychics generally, in the clearest language possible; but if now and then we are charged with being mystical, this is our defence.

### **III. The Method of Studying the Fairy-faith**

In this study, which is first of all a folk-lore study, we pursue principally an anthropo-psychological method of interpreting the Celtic belief in fairies, though we do not hesitate now and then to call in the aid of philology; and we make good use of the evidence offered by mythologies, religions,

metaphysics, and physical sciences. Folk-lore, a century ago was considered beneath the serious consideration of scholars; but there has come about a complete reversal of scholarly opinion, for now it is seen that the beliefs of the people, their legends, and their songs are the source of nearly all literatures, and that their institutions and customs are the origin of those of modern times. And, to-day, to the new science of folk-lore—which, as Mr. Andrew Lang says, must be taken to include psychical research or psychical sciences—archaeology, anthropology, and comparative mythology and religion are indispensable. Thus folk-lore offers the scientific means of studying man in the sense meant by the poet who declared that the proper study of mankind is man.

#### **IV. Divisions of the Study**

This study is divided into four sections or parts. The first one deals with the living Fairy-Faith among the Celts themselves; the second, with the recorded and ancient Fairy-Faith as we find it in Celtic literature and mythology; the third, with the Fairy-Faith in its religious aspects; and in the fourth section an attempt has been made to suggest how the theories of our newest science, psychical research, explain the belief in fairies.

I have set forth in the first section in detail and as clearly as possible the testimony communicated to me by living Celts who either believe in fairies, or else say that they have seen fairies; and throughout other sections I have preferred to draw as much as possible of the material from men and women rather than from books. Books too often are written out of other books, and too seldom from the life of man; and in a scientific study of the Fairy-Faith, such as we have undertaken, the Celt himself is by far the best, in fact the only authority. For us it is much less important to know what scholars think of fairies than to know what the Celtic people think of fairies. This is especially true in considering the Fairy-Faith as it exists now.

## **V. The Collecting of Material**

In June, 1908, after a year's preparatory work in things Celtic under the direction of the Oxford Professor of Celtic, Sir John Rhys, I began to travel in Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and Brittany, and to collect material there at first hand from the people who have shaped and who still keep alive the Fairy-Faith; and during the year 1909–10 fresh folk-lore expeditions were made into Brittany, Ireland, and Wales, and then, finally, the study of the Fairy-Faith was made pan-Celtic by similar expeditions throughout the Isle of Man, and into Cornwall. Many of the most remote parts of these lands were visited; and often there was no other plan to adopt, or any method better, or more natural, than to walk day after day from one straw-thatched cottage to another, living on the simple wholesome food of the peasants. Sometimes there was the picturesque mountain-road to climb, sometimes the route lay through marshy peat-lands, or across a rolling grass-covered country; and with each change of landscape came some new thought and some new impression of the Celtic life, or perhaps some new description of a fairy.

This immersion in the most striking natural and social environment of the Celtic race, gave me an insight into the mind, the religion, the mysticism, and the very heart of the Celt himself, such as no mere study in libraries ever could do. I tried to see the world as he does; I participated in his innermost thoughts about the great problem of life and death, with which he of all peoples is most deeply concerned; and thus he revealed to me the source of his highest ideals and inspirations. I daily felt the deep and innate seriousness of his ancestral nature; and, living as he lives, I tried in all ways to be like him. I was particularly qualified for such an undertaking: partly Celtic myself by blood and perhaps largely so by temperament, I found it easy to sympathize with the Celt and with his environments. Further, being by birth an American, I was in many places privileged to enter where an Englishman, or a non-Celt of Europe would not be; and my education under the free ideals of a new-world democracy always made it possible for me to view economic, political, religious, and racial questions

in Celtic lands apart from the European point of view, and without the European prejudices which are so numerous and so greatly to be regretted. But without any doubt, during my sojourn, extending over three years, among the Celts, these various environments shaped my thoughts about fairies and Fairyland—as they ought to have done if truth is ever to be reached by research.

These experiences of mine lead me to believe that the natural aspects of Celtic countries, much more than those of most non-Celtic countries, impress man and awaken in him some unfamiliar part of himself—call it the Subconscious Self, the Subliminal Self, the Ego, or what you will—which gives him an unusual power to know and to feel invisible, or psychical, influences. What is there, for example, in London, or Paris, or Berlin, or New York to awaken the intuitive power of man, that subconsciousness deep-hidden in him, equal to the solitude of those magical environments of Nature which the Celts enjoy and love?

In my travels, when the weather was too wild to venture out by day, or when the more favourable hours of the night had arrived, with fires and candles lit, or even during a road-side chat amid the day's journey, there was gathered together little by little, from one country and another, the mass of testimony which chapter ii contains. And with all this my opinions began to take shape; for when I set out from Oxford in June, I had no certain or clear ideas as to what fairies are, nor why there should be belief in them. In less than a year afterwards I found myself committed to the Psychological Theory, which I am herein setting forth.

## **VI. Theories of the Fairy-Faith**

We make continual reference throughout our study to this Psychological Theory of the Nature and Origin of the Celtic Fairy-Faith, and it is one of our purposes to demonstrate that this is the root theory which includes or absorbs the four theories already advanced to account for the belief in



fairies. To guide the reader in his own conclusions, we shall here briefly outline these four theories.

The first of them may be called the Naturalistic Theory, which is, that in ancient and in modern times man's belief in gods, spirits, or fairies has been the direct result of his attempts to explain or to rationalize natural phenomena. Of this theory we accept as true that the belief in fairies often anthropomorphically reflects the natural environment as well as the social condition of the people who hold the belief. For example, amid the beautiful low-lying green hills and gentle dells of Connemara (Ireland), the 'good people' are just as beautiful, just as gentle, and just as happy as their environment; while amid the dark-rising mountains and in the mysterious cloud-shadowed lakes of the Scotch Highlands there are fiercer kinds of fairies and terrible water-kelpies, and in the Western Hebrides there is the much-dreaded 'spirit-host' moving through the air at night.

The Naturalistic Theory shows accurately enough that natural phenomena and environment have given direction to the anthropomorphosing of gods, spirits, or fairies, but after explaining this external aspect of the Fairy-Faith it cannot logically go any further. Or if illogically it does attempt to explain the belief in gods, spirits, or fairies as due entirely to material causes, it becomes, in our opinion, like the psychology of fifty years ago, obsolete; for now the new psychology or psychical research has been forced to admit—if only as a working hypothesis—the possibility of invisible intelligences or entities able to influence man and nature. We seem even to be approaching a scientific proof of the doctrines of such ancient philosophical scientists as Pythagoras and Plato—that all external nature, animated throughout and controlled in its phenomena by daemons acting by the will of gods, is to men nothing more than the visible effects of an unseen world of causes.

In the internal aspects of the Fairy-Faith the fundamental fact seems clearly to be that there must have been in the minds of prehistoric men, as there is now in the minds of modern men, a germ idea of a fairy for environment to act upon and shape. Without an object to act upon, environment can accomplish nothing. This is evident. The Naturalistic

Theory examines only the environment and its effects, and forgets altogether the germ idea of a fairy to be acted upon; but the Psychological Theory remembers and attempts to explain the germ idea of a fairy and the effect of nature upon it.

The second theory may be called the Pygmy Theory, which Mr. David MacRitchie, who is definitely committed to it, has so clearly set forth in his well-known work, entitled *The Testimony of Tradition*. This theory is that the whole fairy-belief has grown up out of a folk-memory of an actual Pygmy race. This race is supposed to have been a very early, prehistoric, probably Mongolian race, which inhabited the British Islands and many parts of Continental Europe. When the Celtic nations appeared, these pygmies were driven into mountain fastnesses and into the most inaccessible places, where a few of them may have survived until comparatively historical times.

Over against the champions of the Pygmy Theory may be set two of its opponents, Dr. Bertram C. A. Windle and Mr. Andrew Lang.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Windle, in his Introduction to Tyson's *Philological Essay concerning the Pygmies of the Ancients*, makes these six most destructive criticisms or points against the theory: (1) So far as our present knowledge teaches us, there never was a really Pygmy race inhabiting the northern parts of Scotland; (2) the mounds with which the tales of little people are associated have not, in many cases, been habitations, but were natural or sepulchral in their nature; (3) little people are not by any means associated entirely with mounds; (4) the association of giants and dwarfs in traditions confuses the theory; (5) there are fairies where no pygmies ever were, as, for example, in North America; (6) even Eskimos and Lapps have fairy beliefs, and could not have been the original fairies of more modern fairy-lore. Altogether, as we think our study will show, the evidence of the Fairy-Faith itself gives only a slender and superficial support to the Pygmy Theory. We maintain that the theory, so far as it is provable, and this is evidently not very far, is only one strand, contributed by ethnology and social psychology, in the complex fabric of the Fairy-Faith, and is, as such, woven round a psychical central pattern—the fundamental pattern of the Fairy-Faith. Therefore, from our

point of view, the Pygmy Theory is altogether inadequate, because it overlooks or misinterprets the most essential and prominent elements in the belief which the Celtic peoples hold concerning fairies and Fairyland.

The Druid Theory to account for fairies is less widespread. It is that the folk-memory of the Druids and their magical practices is alone responsible for the Fairy-Faith. The first suggestion of this theory seems to have been made by the Rev. Dr. Crie, in his *Scottish Scenery*, published in 1803.<sup>4</sup> Three years later, the Rev. Dr. Graham published an identical hypothesis in his *Sketches Descriptive of Picturesque Scenery on the Southern Confines of Perthshire*. Mr. MacRitchie suggests, with all reason, that the two writers probably had discussed together the theory, and hence both put it forth. Alfred Maury, in *Les Fées du Moyen-Age*, published in 1843 at Paris, appears to have made liberal use of Patrick Graham's suggestions in propounding his theory that the *fées* or fairy women of the Middle Ages are due to a folk-memory of Druidesses. Maury seems to have forgotten that throughout pagan Britain and Ireland, both much more important for the study of fairies than Celtic Europe during the Middle Ages, Druids rather than Druidesses had the chief influence on the people, and that yet, despite this fact, Irish and Welsh mythology is full of stories about fairy women coming from the Otherworld; nor is there any proof, or even good ground for argument, that the Irish fairy women are a folk-memory of Druidesses, for if there ever were Druidesses in Ireland they played a subordinate and very insignificant rôle. As in the case of the Pygmy Theory, we maintain that the Druid Theory, also, is inadequate. It discovers a real anthropomorphic influence at work on the outward aspects of the Fairy-Faith, and illogically takes that to be the origin of the Fairy-Faith.

The fourth theory, the Mythological Theory, is of very great importance. It is that fairies are the diminished figures of the old pagan divinities of the early Celts; and many modern authorities on Celtic mythology and folk-lore hold it. To us the theory is acceptable so far as it goes. But it is not adequate in itself nor is it the root theory, because a belief in gods and goddesses must in turn be explained; and in making this explanation we arrive at the

Psychological Theory, which this study—perhaps the first one of its kind—attempts to set forth.

## **VII. The Importance of Studying the Fairy-faith**

I have made a very careful personal investigation of the surviving Celtic Fairy-Faith by living for many months with and among the people who preserve it; I have compared fairy phenomena and the phenomena said to be caused by gods, genii, daemons, or spirits of different kinds and recorded in the writings of ancient, mediaeval, and modern metaphysical philosophers, Christian and pagan saints, mystics, and seers, and now more or less clearly substantiated by from thirty to forty years of experimentation in psychical sciences by eminent scientists of our own times, such as Sir William Crookes and Sir Oliver Lodge in England, and M. Camille Flammarion in France. As a result, I am convinced of the very great value of a serious study of the Fairy-Faith. The Fairy-Faith as the folk-religion of the Celts ought, like all religions, to be studied sympathetically as well as scientifically. To those who take a materialistic view of life, and consequently deny the existence of spirits or invisible intelligences such as fairies are said to be, we should say as my honoured American teacher in psychology, the late Dr. William James, of Harvard, used to say in his lectures at Stanford University, ‘Materialism considered as a system of philosophy never tries to explain the *Why* of things.’ But in our study of the Fairy-Faith we shall attempt to deal with this *Why* of things; and, then, perhaps the value of studying fairies and Fairyland will be more apparent, even to materialists.

The great majority of men in cities are apt to pride themselves on their own exemption from ‘superstition’, and to smile pityingly at the poor countrymen and countrywomen who believe in fairies. But when they do so they forget that, with all their own admirable progress in material invention, with all the far-reaching data of their acquired science, with all the vast extent of their commercial and economic conquests, they themselves have

ceased to be natural. Wherever under modern conditions great multitudes of men and women are herded together there is bound to be an unhealthy psychical atmosphere never found in the country—an atmosphere which inevitably tends to develop in the average man who is not psychically strong enough to resist it, lower at the expense of higher forces or qualities, and thus to inhibit any normal attempts of the Subliminal Self (a well-accredited psychological entity) to manifest itself in consciousness. In this connexion it is highly significant to note that, as far as can be determined, almost all professed materialists of the uncritical type, and even most of those who are thinking and philosophizing sceptics about the existence of a supersensuous realm or state of conscious being, are or have been city-dwellers—usually so by birth and breeding. And even where we find materialists of either type dwelling in the country, we generally find them so completely under the hypnotic sway of city influences and mould of thought in matters of education and culture, and in matters touching religion, that they have lost all sympathetic and responsive contact with Nature, because unconsciously they have thus permitted conventionality and unnaturalness to insulate them from it. The Celtic peasant, who may be their tenant or neighbour, is—if still uncorrupted by them—in direct contrast unconventional and natural. He is normally always responsive to psychical influences—as much so as an Australian Arunta or an American Red Man, who also, like him, are fortunate enough to have escaped being corrupted by what we egotistically, to distinguish ourselves from them, call ‘civilization’. If our Celtic peasant has psychical experiences, or if he sees an apparition which he calls one of the ‘good people’, that is to say a fairy, it is useless to try to persuade him that he is under a delusion: unlike his materialistically-minded lord, he would not attempt nor even desire to make himself believe that what he has seen he has not seen. Not only has he the will to believe, but he has the right to believe; because his belief is not a matter of being educated and reasoning logically, nor a matter of faith and theology—it is a fact of his own individual experiences, as he will tell you. Such peasant seers have frequently argued with me to the effect that ‘One does not have to be educated in order to see fairies’.

Unlike the natural mind of the uncorrupted Celt, Arunta, or American Red Man, which is ever open to unusual psychical impressions, the mind of the business man in our great cities tends to be obsessed with business affairs both during his waking and during his dream states, the politician's with politics similarly, the society-leader's with society; and the unwholesome excitement felt by day in the city is apt to be heightened at night through a satisfying of the feeling which it morbidly creates for relaxation and change of stimuli. In the slums, humanity is divorced from Nature under even worse conditions, and becomes wholly decadent. But in slum and in palace alike there is continually a feverish nerve-tension induced by unrest and worry; there is impure and smoke-impregnated air, a lack of sunshine, a substitution of artificial objects for natural objects, and in place of solitude the eternal din of traffic. Instead of Nature, men in cities (and paradoxically some conventionalized men in the country) have 'civilization'—and 'culture'.

Are city-dwellers like these, Nature's unnatural children, who grind out their lives in an unceasing struggle for wealth and power, social position, and even for bread, fit to judge Nature's natural children who believe in fairies? Are they right in not believing in an invisible world which they cannot conceive, which, if it exists, they—even though they be scientists—are through environment and temperament alike incapable of knowing? Or is the country-dwelling, the sometimes 'unpractical' and 'unsuccessful', the dreaming, and 'uncivilized' peasant right? These questions ought to arouse in the minds of anthropologists very serious reflection, world-wide in its scope.

At all events, and equally for the unbeliever and for the believer, the study of the Fairy-Faith is of vast importance historically, philosophically, religiously, and scientifically. In it lie the germs of much of our European religions and philosophies, customs, and institutions. And it is one of the chief keys to unlock the mysteries of Celtic mythology. We believe that a greater age is coming soon, when all the ancient mythologies will be carefully studied and interpreted, and when the mythology of the Celts will be held in very high esteem. But already an age has come when things

purely Celtic have begun to be studied; and the close observer can see the awakening genius of the modern Celt manifesting itself in the realm of scholarship, of literature, and even of art—throughout Continental Europe, especially France and Germany, throughout Great Britain and Ireland, and throughout the new Celtic world of America, as far west as San Francisco on the great calm ocean of the future facing Japan and China. In truth the Celtic empire is greater than it ever was before Caesar destroyed its political unity; and its citizens have not forgotten the ancient faith of their ancestors in a world invisible.

W. Y. E. W.



# **Section I**

## **The Living Fairy-faith**

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## **Chapter I**

### **Environment**

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‘In the Beauty of the World lies the ultimate redemption of our mortality. When we shall become at one with nature in a sense profounder even than the poetic imaginings of most of us, we shall understand what now we fail to discern.’—Fiona Macleod.

Psychical interpretation—The mysticism of Erin and Armorica—In Ireland—In Scotland—In the Isle of Man—In Wales—In Cornwall—In Brittany.

As a preliminary to our study it is important, as we shall see later, to give some attention to the influences and purely natural environment under which the Fairy-Faith has grown up. And in doing so it will be apparent to what extent there is truth in the Naturalistic Theory; though from the first our interpretation of Environment is fundamentally psychical. In this first chapter, then, in so far as they can be recorded, we shall record a few impressions, which will, in a way, serve as introductory to the more definite and detailed consideration of the Fairy-Faith itself.

Ireland and Brittany, the two extremes of the modern Celtic world, are for us the most important points from which to take our initial bearings. Both washed by the waters of the Ocean of Atlantis, the one an island, the other a peninsula, they have best preserved their old racial life in its simplicity and beauty, with its high ideals, its mystical traditions, and its

strong spirituality. And, curious though the statement may appear to some, this preservation of older manners and traditions does not seem to be due so much to geographical isolation as to subtle forces so strange and mysterious that to know them they must be felt; and their nature can only be suggested, for it cannot be described. Over Erin and Armorica, as over Egypt, there hovers a halo of romance, of strangeness, of mysticism real and positive; and, if we mistake not the language of others, these phrases of ours but echo opinions common to many Celts native of the two countries—they who have the first right to testify; and not only are there poets and seers among them, but men of the practical world as well, and men of high rank in scholarship, in literature, in art, and even in science.

### **In Ireland**

If anyone would know Ireland and test these influences—influences which have been so fundamental in giving to the Fairy-Faith of the past something more than mere beauty of romance and attractive form, and something which even to-day, as in the heroic ages, is ever-living and ever-present in the centres where men of the second-sight say that they see fairies in that strange state of subjectivity which the peasant calls Fairyland—let him stand on the Hill of Tara silently and alone at sunset, in the noonday, in the mist of a dark day. Let him likewise silently and alone follow the course of the Boyne. Let him enter the silence of New Grange and of Dowth. Let him muse over the hieroglyphics of Lough Crew. Let him feel the mystic beauty of Killarney, the peacefulness of Glendalough, of Monasterboise, of Clonmacnois, and the isolation of Aranmore. Let him dare to enter the rings of fairies, to tempt the ‘good folk’ at their *raths* and *forts*. Let him rest on the ancient cairn above the mountain-palace of Finvara and look out across the battlefields of Moytura. Let him wander amid the fairy dells of gentle Connemara. Let him behold the Irish Sea from the Heights of Howth, as Fionn Mac Cumhail used to do. Let him listen to the ocean-winds amid Dun Aengus. Let him view the stronghold of Cuchulainn and the Red Branch

Knights. Let him linger beside that mysterious lake which lies embosomed between two prehistoric cairns on the summit of enchanted Slieve Gullion, where yet dwells invisible the mountain's Guardian, a fairy woman. Let him then try to interpret the mysticism of an ancient Irish myth, in order to understand why men have been told that in the plain beneath this magic mountain of Ireland mighty warfare was once waged on account of a Bull, by the hosts of Queen Meave against those of Cuchulainn the hero of Ulster. Let him be lost in the mists on the top of Ben Bulbin. Let him know the haunts of fairy kings and queens in Roscommon. Let him follow in the footsteps of Patrick and Bridgit and Columba. When there are dark days and stormy nights, let him sit beside a blazing fire of fragrant peat in a peasant's straw-thatched cottage listening to tales of Ireland's golden age—tales of gods, of heroes, of ghosts, and of fairy-folk. If he will do these things, he will know Ireland, and why its people believe in fairies.

As yet, little has been said concerning the effects of clouds, of natural scenery, of weird and sudden transformations in earth and sky and air, which play their part in shaping the complete Fairy-Faith of the Irish; but what we are about to say concerning Scotland will suggest the same things for Ireland, because the nature of the landscape and the atmospheric changes are much the same in the two countries, both inland and on their rock-bound and storm-swept shores.

## **In Scotland**

In the moorlands between Trossachs and Aberfoyle, a region made famous by Scott's *Rob Roy*, I have seen atmospheric changes so sudden and so contrasted as to appear marvellous. What shifting of vapours and clouds, what flashes of bright sun-gleams, then twilight at midday! Across the landscape, shadows of black dense fog-banks rush like shadows of flocks of great birds which darken all the earth. Palpitating fog-banks wrap themselves around the mountain-tops and then come down like living things to move across the valleys, sometimes only a few yards above the

traveller's head. And in that country live terrible water-kelpies. When black clouds discharge their watery burden it is in wind-driven vertical water-sheets through which the world appears as through an ice-filmed window-pane. Perhaps in a single day there may be the bluest of heavens and the clearest air, the densest clouds and the darkest shadows, the calm of the morning and the wind of the tempest. At night in Aberfoyle after such a day, I witnessed a clear sunset and a fair evening sky; in the morning when I arose, the lowlands along the river were inundated and a thousand cascades, large and small, were leaping down the mountain-highlands, and rain was falling in heavy masses. Within an hour afterwards, as I travelled on towards Stirling, the rain and wind ceased, and there settled down over all the land cloud-masses so inky-black that they seemed like the fancies of some horrible dream. Then like massed armies they began to move to their mountain-strongholds, and stood there; while from the east came perfect weather and a flood of brilliant sunshine.

And in the Highlands from Stirling to Inverness what magic, what changing colours and shadows there were on the age-worn treeless hills, and in the valleys with their clear, pure streams receiving tribute from unnumbered little rills and springs, some dropping water drop by drop as though it were fairy-distilled; and everywhere the heather giving to the mountain-landscape a hue of rich purplish-brown, and to the air an odour of aromatic fragrance.

On to the north-west beyond Inverness there is the same kind of a treeless highland country; and then after a few hours of travel one looks out across the water from Kyle and beholds Skye, where Cuchulainn is by some believed to have passed his young manhood learning feats of arms from fairy women—Skye, dark, mountainous, majestic, with its waterfalls turning to white spray as they tumble from cliff to cliff into the sound, from out the clouds that hide their mountain-summit sources.

In the Outer Hebrides, as in the Aranmore Islands off West Ireland, influences are at work on the Celtic imagination quite different from those in Skye and its neighbouring islands. Mountainous billows which have travelled from afar out of the mysterious watery waste find their first

impediment on the west of these isolated Hebridean isles, and they fling themselves like mad things in full fury against the wild rocky islets fringing the coast. White spray flashes in unearthly forms over the highest cliff, and the unrestrained hurricane whirls it far inland. Ocean's eternally murmuring sounds set up a responsive vibration in the soul of the peasant, as he in solitude drives home his flocks amid the weird gloaming at the end of a December day; and, later, when he sits brooding in his humble cottage at night, in the fitful flickering of a peat fire, he has a mystic consciousness that deep down in his being there is a more divine music compared with which that of external nature is but a symbol and an echo; and, as he stirs the glowing peat-embers, phantoms from an irretrievable past seem to be sitting with him on the edge of the half-circle of dying light. Maybe there are skin-clad huntsmen of the sea and land, with spears and knives of bone and flint and shaggy sleeping dogs, or fearless sea-rovers resting wearily on shields of brilliant bronze, or maybe Celtic warriors fierce and bold; and then he understands that his past and his present are one.

Commonly there is the thickest day-darkness when the driving storms come in from the Atlantic, or when dense fog covers sea and land; and, again, there are melancholy sea-winds moaning across from shore to shore, bending the bushes of the purple heather. At other times there is a sparkle of the brightest sunshine on the ocean waves, a fierceness foreign to the more peaceful Highlands; and then again a dead silence prevails at sunrise and at sunset if one be on the mountains, or, if on the shore, no sound is heard save the rhythmical beat of the waves, and now and then the hoarse cry of a sea-bird. All these contrasted conditions may be seen in one day, or each may endure for a day; and the dark days last nearly all the winter. And then it is, during the long winter, that the crofters and fisher-folk congregate night after night in a different neighbour's house to tell about fairies and ghosts, and to repeat all those old legends so dear to the heart of the Celt. Perhaps every one present has heard the same story or legend a hundred times, yet it is always listened to and told as though it were the latest bulletin of some great world-stirring event. Over those little islands, so far away to the north, out on the edge of the world, in winter-time darkness settles down at four

o'clock or even earlier; and the islanders hurry through with their dinner of fish and oat-bread so as not to miss hearing the first story. When the company has gathered from far and near, pipes are re-filled and lit and the peat is heaped up, for the story-telling is not likely to end before midnight. 'The house is roomy and clean, if homely, with its bright peat fire in the middle of the floor. There are many present—men and women, boys and girls. All the women are seated, and most of the men. Girls are crouched between the knees of fathers or brothers or friends, while boys are perched wherever—boy-like—they can climb. The houseman is twisting twigs of heather into ropes to hold down thatch, a neighbour crofter is twining quicken root into cords to tie cows, while another is plaiting bent grass into baskets to hold meal. The housewife is spinning, a daughter is carding, another daughter is teasing, while a third daughter, supposed to be working, is away in the background conversing in low whispers with the son of a neighbouring crofter. Neighbour wives and neighbour daughters are knitting, sewing, or embroidering.'<sup>5</sup> Then when the bad weather for fishing has been fully discussed by the men, and the latest gossip by the women, and the foolish talk of the youths and maidens in the corners is finished, the one who occupies the chair of honour in the midst of the *ceilidh*<sup>6</sup> looks around to be sure that everybody is comfortable and ready; and, as his first story begins, even the babes by instinct cease their noise and crying, and young and old bend forward eagerly to hear every word. It does not matter if some of the boys and girls do topple over asleep, or even some of the older folk as the hour gets late; the tales meet no interruption in their even, unbroken flow. And here we have the most Celtic and the most natural environments which the Fairy-Faith enjoys in Scotland.

There are still the Southern Highlands in the country around Oban, and the islands near them; and of all these isles none is so picturesque in history as the one Columba loved so well. Though Iona enjoys less of the wildness of the Hebrides furthest west, it has their storm-winds and fogs and dark days, and their strangeness of isolation. On it, as Adamnan tells us, the holy man fought with black demons who came to invade his monastery, and saw angelic hosts; and when the angels took his soul at midnight in that little

chapel by the sea-shore there was a mystic light which illuminated all the altar like the brightest sunshine. But nowadays, where the saint saw demons and angels the Islanders see ghosts and ‘good people’, and when one of these islanders is taken in death it is not by angels—it is by fairies.

### **In the Isle of Man**

In the midst of the Irish Sea, almost equidistant from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and concentrating in itself the psychical and magnetic influences from these three Celtic lands, and from Celto-Saxon England too, lies the beautiful kingdom of the great Tuatha De Danann god, Manannan Mac Lir, or, as his loyal Manx subjects prefer to call him, Mannanan-Beg-Mac-y-Leir. In no other land of the Celt does Nature show so many moods and contrasts, such perfect repose at one time and at another time the mightiness of its unloosed powers, when the baffled sea throws itself angrily against a high rock-bound coast, as wild and almost as weather-worn as the western coasts of Ireland and the Hebrides.

But it is Nature’s calmer moods which have greater effect upon the Manx people: on the summit of his ancient stronghold, South Barrule Mountain, the god Manannan yet dwells invisible to mortal eyes, and whenever on a warm day he throws off his magic mist-blanket with which he is wont to cover the whole island, the golden gorse or purple heather blossoms become musical with the hum of bees, and sway gently on breezes made balmy by the tropical warmth of an ocean stream flowing from the far distant Mexican shores of a New World. Then in many a moist and sweet-smelling glen, pure and verdant, land-birds in rejoicing bands add to the harmony of sound, as they gather on the newly-ploughed field or dip themselves in the clear water of the tinkling brook; and from the cliffs and rocky islets on the coast comes the echo of the multitudinous chorus of sea-birds. At sunset, on such a day, as evening calmness settles down, weird mountain shadows begin to move across the dimly-lighted glens; and when

darkness has fallen, there is a mystic stillness, broken only by the ceaseless throbbing of the sea-waves, the flow of brooks, and the voices of the night.

In the moorland solitudes, even by day, there sometimes broods a deeper silence, which is yet more potent and full of meaning for the peasant, as under its spell he beholds the peaceful vision, happy and sunlit, of sea and land, of gentle mountains falling away in land-waves into well-tilled plains and fertile valleys; and he comes to feel instinctively the old Druidic Fires relit within his heart, and perhaps unconsciously he worships there in Nature's Temple. The natural beauty without awakens the divine beauty within, and for a second of time he, out of his subconsciousness, is conscious that in Nature there are beings and inaudible voices which have no existence for the flippant pleasure-seeking crowds who come and go. To the multitude, his ancestral beliefs are foolishness, his fairies but the creatures of a fervid Celtic imagination which readily responds to unusual phenomena and environments. They will not believe with him that all beauty and harmony in the world are but symbolic, and that behind these stand unseen sustaining forces and powers which are conscious and eternal; and though by instinct they willingly personify Nature they do not know the secret of why they do so: for them the outer is reality, the inner non-existent.

From the Age of Stone to the civilized era of to-day, the Isle of Man has been, in succession, the home of every known race and people who have flourished in Western Europe; and though subject, in turn, to the Irish Gael and to the Welsh Brython, to Northmen and to Danes, to Scots and to English, and the scene of sweeping transformations in religion, as pagan cults succeeded one another, to give way to the teaching of St. Patrick and his disciples St. German and St. Maughold, and this finally to the Protestant form of Christianity, the island alone of Celtic lands has been strangely empowered to maintain in almost primitive purity its ancient constitution and freedom, and though geographically at the very centre of the United Kingdom, is not a part of it. The archaeologist may still read in mysterious symbols of stone and earth, as they lie strewn over the island's surface, the history of this age-long panoramic procession of human evolution; while



through these same symbols the Manx seer reads a deeper meaning; and sometimes in the superhuman realm of radiant light, to which since long ago they have oft come and oft returned, he meets face to face the gods and heroes whose early tombs stand solitary on the wind-swept mountain-top and moorland, or hidden away in the embrace of wild flowers and verdure amid valleys; and in the darker mid-world he sees innumerable ghosts of many of these races which have perished.

## **In Wales**

Less can be said of Wales than of Ireland, or of Scotland as a whole. It has, it is true, its own peculiar psychic atmosphere, different, no doubt, because its people are Brythonic Celts rather than Gaelic Celts. But Wales, with conditions more modernized than is the case in Ireland or in the Western Hebrides of Scotland, does not now exhibit in a vigorous or flourishing state those Celtic influences which, when they were active, did so much to create the precious Romances of Arthur and his Brotherhood, and to lay the foundations for the Welsh belief in the *Tylwyth Teg*, a fairy race still surviving in a few favoured localities.

Wales, like all Celtic countries, is a land of long sea-coasts, though there seems to be, save in the mountains of the north, less of mist and darkness and cloud effects than in Ireland and Scotland. In the south, perhaps the most curious influences are to be felt at St. David's Head, and in St. David's itself—once the goal for thousands of pilgrims from many countries of mediaeval Europe, and, probably, in pagan times the seat of an oracle. And a place of like character is the peninsula of Gower, south of Swansea. Caerphilly Castle, where the Green Lady reigns now amid its ruined acres, is a strange place; and so is the hill near Carmarthen, where Merlin is asleep in a cave with the fairy-woman Vivian. But in none of these places to-day is there a strong living faith in fairies as there is, for example, in West Ireland. The one region where I found a real Celtic atmosphere—and it is a region where everybody speaks Welsh—is a mountainous country rarely visited by

travellers, save archaeologists, a few miles from Newport; and its centre is the Pentre Evan Cromlech, the finest cromlech in Wales if not in Britain. By this prehistoric monument and in the country round the old Nevern Church, three miles away, there is an active belief in the 'fair-folk', in ghosts, in death-warnings, in death-candles and phantom-funerals, and in witchcraft and black magic. Thence on to Newcastle-Emlyn and its valley, where many of the Mabinogion stories took form, or at least from where they drew rich material in the way of folk-lore,<sup>7</sup> are environments purely Welsh and as yet little disturbed by the commercial materialism of the age.

There remain now to be mentioned three other places in Wales to me very impressive psychically. These are: ancient Harlech, so famous in recorded Welsh fairy-romance—Harlech with its strange stone-circles, and old castle from which the Snowdon Range is seen to loom majestically and clear, and with its sun-kissed bay; Mount Snowdon, with its memories of Arthur and Welsh heroes; and sacred Anglesey or Mona, strewn with tumuli, and dolmens, and pillar-stones—Mona, where the Druids made their last stand against the Roman eagles—and its little island called Holyhead, facing Ireland.

However, when all is said, modern Wales is poorer in its fairy atmosphere than modern Ireland or modern Brittany. Certainly there is a good deal of this fairy atmosphere yet, though it has become less vital than the similar fairy atmosphere in the great centres of Erin and Armorica. But the purely social environment under which the Fairy-Faith of Wales survives is a potent force which promises to preserve underneath the surface of Welsh national life, where the commercialism of the age has compelled it to retire in a state of temporary latency, the ancestral idealism of the ancient Brythonic race. In Wales, as in Lower Brittany and in parts of Ireland and the Hebrides, one may still hear in common daily use a language which has been continuously spoken since unknown centuries before the rise of the Roman empire. And the strong hold which the Druidic *Eisteddfod* (an annual national congress of bards and literati) continues to have upon the Welsh people, in spite of their commercialism, is, again, a sign that their hearts remain uncorrupted, that when the more favourable hour strikes they

will sweep aside the deadening influences which now hold them in spiritual bondage, and become, as they were in the past, true children of Arthur.

## **In Cornwall**

Strikingly like Brittany in physical aspects, Southern and Western Cornwall is a land of the sea, of rolling plains and moorlands rather than of high hills and mountains, a land of golden-yellow furze-bloom, where noisy crowds of black crows and white sea-gulls mingle together over the freshly-turned or new-sown fields, and where in the spring-time the call of the cuckoo is heard with the song of the skylark. Like the Isle of Man, from the earliest ages Cornwall has been a meeting-place and a battle-ground for contending races. The primitive dark Iberian peoples gave way before Aryan-Celtic invaders, and these to Roman and then to Germanic invaders.

Nature has been kind to the whole of Cornwall, but chiefly upon the peninsula whose ancient capital is Penzance (which possibly means ‘the Holy Headland’), and upon the land immediately eastward and northward of it, she has bestowed her rarest gifts. Holding this territory embosomed in the pure waters of Ocean, and breathing over it the pure air of the Atlantic in spring and in summer calm, when the warm vapours from the Gulf Stream sweep over it freely, and make it a land of flowers and of singing-birds, Nature preserves eternally its beauty and its sanctity. There are there ruined British villages whose builders are long forgotten, strange prehistoric circular sun-temples like fortresses crowning the hill-tops, mysterious underground passage-ways, and crosses probably pre-Christian. Everywhere are the records of the mighty past of this thrice-holy Druid land of sunset. There are weird legends of the lost kingdom of Fair Lyonesse, which seers sometimes see beneath the clear salt waves, with all its ancient towns and flowery fields; legends of Phoenicians and Oriental merchants who came for tin; legends of gods and of giants, of pixies and of fairies, of King Arthur in his castle at Tintagel, of angels and of saints, of witches and of wizards.

On *Dinsul*, ‘Hill dedicated to the Sun,’ pagan priests and priestesses kept kindled the Eternal Fire, and daily watched eastward for the rising of the God of Light and Life, to greet his coming with paeans of thanksgiving and praise. Then after the sixth century the new religion had come proclaiming a more mystic Light of the World in the Son of God, and to the pious half-pagan monks who succeeded the Druids the Archangel St. Michael appeared in vision on the Sacred Mount.<sup>8</sup> And before St. Augustine came to Britain the Celts of Cornwall had already combined in their own mystical way the spiritual message of primitive Christianity with the pure nature-worship of their ancestors; and their land was then, as it most likely had been in pagan days, a centre of pilgrimages for their Celtic kinsmen from Ireland, from Wales, from England, and from Brittany. When in later times new theological doctrines were superimposed on this mysticism of Celtic Christianity, the Sacred Fires were buried in ashes, and the Light and Beauty of the pagan world obscured with sackcloth.

But there in that most southern and western corner of the Isle of Britain, the Sacred Fires themselves still burn on the divine hill-tops, though smothered in the hearts of its children. The Cornishman’s vision is no longer clear. He looks upon cromlech and dolmen, upon ancient caves of initiation, and upon the graves of his prehistoric ancestors, and vaguely feels, but does not know, why his land is so holy, is so permeated by an indefinable magic; for he has lost his ancestral mystic touch with the unseen—he is ‘educated’ and ‘civilized’. The hand of the conqueror has fallen more heavily upon the people of Cornwall than upon any other Celtic people, and now for a time, but let us hope happily only for this dark period of transition, they sleep—until Arthur comes to break the spell and set them free.

## **In Brittany**

As was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Ireland and Brittany are to be regarded as the two poles of the modern Celtic world, but it is

believed by Celtic mystics that they are much more than this, that they are two of its psychic centres, with Tara and Carnac as two respective points of focus from which the Celtic influence of each country radiates.<sup>9</sup> With such a psychical point of view, it makes no difference at all whether one scholar argues Carnac to be Celtic and another pre-Celtic, for if pre-Celtic, as it most likely is, it has certainly been bequeathed to the people who were and are Celtic, and its influence has been an unbroken thing from times altogether beyond the horizon of history. According to this theory (and in following it we are merely trying to put on record unique material transmitted to us by the most learned of contemporary Celtic mystics and seers) there seem to be certain favoured places on the earth where its magnetic and even more subtle forces are most powerful and most easily felt by persons susceptible to such things; and Carnac appears to be one of the greatest of such places in Europe, and for this reason, as has been thought, was probably selected by its ancient priest-builders as the great centre for religious practices, for the celebration of pagan mysteries, for tribal assemblies, for astronomical observations, and very likely for establishing schools in which to educate neophytes for the priesthood. Tara, with its tributary Boyne valley, is a similar place in Ireland, so selected and so used, as, in our study of the cult of fairies and the cult of the dead, manuscript evidence will later indicate. And thus to such psychical and magnetic, or, according perhaps to others, religious or traditional influences as focus themselves at Tara and Carnac, though in other parts of the two countries as well, may be due in a great, even in an essential measure, the vigorous and ever-living Fairy-Faith of Ireland, and the innate and ever-conscious belief of the Breton people in the Legend of the Dead and in a world invisible. For fairies and souls of the dead, though, strictly speaking, not confused, are believed to be beings of the subjective world existing to-day, and influencing mortals, as they have always existed and influenced them according to ancient and modern traditions, and as they appear now in the eyes even of science through the work of a few pioneer scientists in psychical research. And it seems probable that subjective beings of this kind, granting their existence, were made use of by the ancient Druids, and

even by Patrick when the old and new religions met to do battle on the Hill of Tara. The control of Tara, as a psychical centre, meant the psychical control of all Ireland. To-day on the Hill of Tara the statue of St. Patrick dwarfs the Liath Stone beside it; at Carnac the Christian Cross overshadows dolmens and menhirs.

A learned priest of the Roman Church told me, when I met him in Galway, that in his opinion those places in Ireland where ancient sacrifices were performed to pagan or Druid gods are still, unless they have been regularly exorcized, under the control of demons (daemons). And what the Druids were at Tara and throughout Erin and most probably at Carnac as well, the priests were in Egypt, and the pythonesses in Greece. That is to say, Druids, Egyptian priests, priestesses in charge of Greek oracles, are said to have foretold the future, interpreted omens, worked all miracles and wonders of magic by the aid of daemons, who were regarded as an order of invisible beings, intermediary between gods and men, and as sometimes including the shades from Hades.

I should say as before, if he who knowing Ireland, the Land of Faerie, would know in the same manner Brittany, the Land of the Dead, let him silently and alone walk many times—in sun, in wind, in storm, in thick mist—through the long, broad avenues of stone of the Alignements at Carnac. Let him watch from among them the course of the sun from east to west. Let him stand on St. Michael's Mount on the day of the winter solstice, or on the day of the summer solstice. Let him enter the silence of its ancient underground chamber, so dark and so mysterious. Let him sit for hours musing amid cromlechs and dolmens, and beside menhirs, and at holy wells. Let him marvel at the mightiest of menhirs now broken and prostrate at Locmariaquer, and then let him ponder over the subterranean places near it. Let him try to read the symbolic inscriptions on the rocks in Gavrinis. Let him stand on the Île de Sein at sunrise and at sunset. Let him penetrate the solitudes of the Forest of Brocéliande, and walk through the Val-Sans-Retour (Vale-Without-Return). And then let him wander in footpaths with the Breton peasant through fields where good dames sit on the sunny side of a bush or wall, knitting stockings, where there are long hedges of furze,

golden-yellow with bloom—even in January—and listen to stories about *corrigans*, and about the dead who mingle here with the living. Let him enter the peasant's cottage when there is fog over the land and the sea-winds are blowing across the shifting sand-dunes, and hear what he can tell him. Let him, even as he enjoys the picturesque customs and dress of the Breton folk and looks on at their joyous *ronde* (perhaps the relic of a long-forgotten sun-dance), observe the depth of their nature, their almost ever-present sense of the seriousness of human life and effort, their beautiful characters as their mystic land has shaped them without the artificiality of books and schools, their dreaminess as they look out across the ocean, their often perfect physique and fine profiles and rosy cheeks, and yet withal their brooding innate melancholy. And let him know that there is with them always an overshadowing consciousness of an invisible world, not in some distant realm of space, but here and now, blending itself with this world; its inhabitants, their dead ancestors and friends, mingling with them daily, and awaiting the hour when the *Ankou* (a King of the Dead) shall call each to join their invisible company.

## Chapter II

### The Taking of Evidence

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‘During all these centuries the Celt has kept in his heart some affinity with the mighty beings ruling in the Unseen, once so evident to the heroic races who preceded him. His legends and faery tales have connected his soul with the inner lives of air and water and earth, and they in turn have kept his heart sweet with hidden influence.’—A. E.

Method of presentation—The logical verdict—Trustworthiness of legends—The Fairy-Faith held by the highly educated Celt as well as by the Celtic peasant—The evidence is complete and adequate—Its analysis—The Fairy-Tribes dealt with—Witnesses and their

testimony: from Ireland, with introduction by Dr. Douglas Hyde; from Scotland, with introduction by Dr. Alexander Carmichael; from the Isle of Man, with introduction by Miss Sophia Morrison; from Wales, with introduction by the Right Hon. Sir John Rhÿs; from Cornwall, with introduction by Mr. Henry Jenner; and from Brittany, with introduction by Professor Anatole Le Braz.

## **I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Various possible plans have presented themselves for setting forth the living Fairy-Faith as I have found it during my travels in the six Celtic countries among the people who hold it. To take a bit here and a bit there from a miscellaneous group of psychological experiences, fairy legends and stories which are linked together almost inseparably in the mind of the one who tells them, does not seem at all satisfactory, nor even just, in trying to arrive at a correct result. Classification under various headings, such, for example, as Fairy Abductions, Changelings, or Appearances of Fairies, seems equally unsatisfactory; for as soon as the details of folk-lore such as I am presenting are isolated from one another—even though brought together in related groups—they must be rudely torn out of their true and natural environment, and divorced from the psychological atmosphere amidst which they were first presented by the narrator. The same objection applies to any plan of dividing the evidence into (1) that which is purely legendary; (2) that which is second-hand or third-hand evidence from people who claim to have seen fairies, or to have been in Fairyland or under fairy influences; and (3) that which is first-hand evidence from actual percipients: these three classes of evidence are so self-evident that every reader will be able to distinguish each class for himself as it occurs, and a mechanical classification by us is unnecessary. So no plan seems so good as the plan I have adopted of permitting all witnesses to give their own testimony in their own way and in its native setting, and then of classifying and weighing such testimony



according to the methods of comparative religion and the anthropological sciences.

In most cases, as examination will show, the evidence is so clear that little or no comment is necessary. Most of the evidence also points so much in one direction that the only verdict which seems reasonable is that the Fairy-Faith belongs to a doctrine of souls; that is to say, that Fairyland is a state or condition, realm or place, very much like, if not the same as, that wherein civilized and uncivilized men alike place the souls of the dead, in company with other invisible beings such as gods, daemons, and all sorts of good and bad spirits. Not only do both educated and uneducated Celtic seers so conceive Fairyland, but they go much further, and say that Fairyland actually exists as an invisible world within which the visible world is immersed like an island in an unexplored ocean, and that it is peopled by more species of living beings than this world, because incomparably more vast and varied in its possibilities.

We should be prepared in hearing the evidence to meet with some contradictions and a good deal of confusion, for many of the people who believe in such a strange world as we have just described, and who think they sometimes have entered it or have seen some of its inhabitants, have often had no training at all in schools or colleges. But when we hear legendary tales which have never been recorded save in the minds of unnumbered generations of men, we ought not on that account to undervalue them; for often they are better authorities and more trustworthy than many an ancient and carefully inscribed manuscript in the British Museum; and they are probably far older than the oldest book in the world. Let us, then, for a time, forget that there are such things as libraries and universities, and betake ourselves to the Celtic peasant for instruction, living close to nature as he lives, and thinking the things which he thinks.

But the peasant will not be our only teacher, for we shall also hear much of first importance from city folk of the highest intellectual training. It has become, perhaps always has been in modern times, a widespread opinion, even among some scholars, that the belief in fairies is the property solely of simple, uneducated country-folk, and that people who have had 'a touch of

education and a little common sense knocked into their heads', to use the ordinary language, 'wouldn't be caught believing in such nonsense.' This same class of critics used to make similar remarks about people who said there were ghosts, until the truth of another 'stupid superstition' was discovered by psychical research. So in this chapter we hope to correct this erroneous opinion about the Fairy-Faith, an opinion chiefly entertained by scholars and others who know not the first real fact about fairies, because they have never lived amongst the people who believe in fairies, but derive all their information from books and hearsay. In due order the proper sort of witnesses will substantiate this position, but before coming to their testimony we may now say that there are men and women in Dublin, in other parts of Ireland, in Scotland, in the Isle of Man, and in Brythonic lands too, whom all the world knows as educated leaders in their respective fields of activity, who not only declare their belief that fairies were, but that fairies are; and some of these men and women say that they have the power to see fairies as real spiritual beings.

In the evidence about to be presented there has been no selecting in favour of any one theory; it is presented as discovered. The only liberty taken with some of the evidence has been to put it into better grammatical form, and sometimes to recast an ambiguous statement when I, as collector, had in my own mind no doubt as to its meaning. Translations have been made as literal as possible; though sometimes it has been found better to offer the meaning rather than what in English would be an obscure colloquialism or idiomatic expression. The method pursued in seeking the evidence has been to penetrate as deeply and in as natural a way as possible the thoughts of the people who believe in fairies and like beings, by living among them and observing their customs and ways of thought, and recording what seemed relevant to the subject under investigation—chance expressions, and legends told under various ordinary conditions—rather than to collect long legends or literary fairy-stories. For these last the reader is referred to the many excellent works on Celtic folk-lore. We have sought to bring together, as perhaps has not been done before, the philosophy of the belief in fairies, rather than the mere fairy-lore itself, though the two cannot

be separated. In giving the evidence concerning fairies, we sometimes give evidence which, though akin to it and thus worthy of record, is not strictly fairy-lore. All that we have omitted from the materials in the form first taken down are stories and accounts of things not sufficiently related to the world of Faerie to be of value here.

In no case has testimony been admitted from a person who was known to be unreliable, nor even from a person who was thought to be unreliable. Accordingly, the evidence we are to examine ought to be considered good evidence so far as it goes; and since it represents almost all known elements of the Fairy-Faith and contains almost all the essential elements upon which the advocates of the Naturalistic Theory, of the Pygmy Theory, of the Druid Theory, of the Mythological Theory, as well as of our own Psychological Theory, must base their arguments, we consider it very adequate evidence. Nearly every witness is a Celt who has been made acquainted with the belief in fairies through direct contact with people who believe in them, or through having heard fairy-traditions among his own kindred, or through personal psychological experiences. And it is exceedingly fortunate for us that an unusually large proportion of these Celtic witnesses are actual percipients and natural seers, because the eliminations from the Fairy-Faith to be brought about in chapter iii by means of an anthropological analysis of evidence will be so extensive that, scientifically and strictly speaking, there will remain as a residual or unknown quantity, upon which our final conclusion must depend, solely the testimony of reliable seer-witnesses. That is to say, no method of anthropological dissection of the evidence can force aside consideration of the ultimate truth which may or may not reside in the testimony of sane and thoroughly reliable seer-witnesses.

Old and young, educated and uneducated, peasant and city-bred, testify to the actual existence of the Celtic Fairy-Faith; and the evidence from Roman Catholics stands beside that from Protestants, the evidence of priests supports that of scholars and scientists, peasant seers have testified to the same kind of visions as highly educated seers; and what poets have said agrees with what is told by business men, engineers, and lawyers. But the best of witnesses, like ourselves, are only human, and subject to the

shortcomings of the ordinary man, and therefore no claim can be made in any case to infallibility of evidence: all the world over men interpret visions pragmatically and sociologically, or hold beliefs in accord with their own personal experiences; and are for ever unconsciously immersed in a sea of psychological influences which sometimes may be explainable through the methods of sociological inquiry, sometimes may be supernormal in origin and nature, and hence to be explained most adequately, if at all, through psychical research. Our study is a study of human nature itself, and, moreover, often of human nature in its most subtle aspects, which are called psychical; and the most difficult problem of all is for human nature to interpret and understand its own ultimate essence and psychological instincts. Our whole aim is to discover what reasonableness may or may not stand behind a belief so vast, so ancient, so common (contrary to popular non-Celtic opinion) to all classes of Celts, and so fundamental a shaping force in European history, religion, and social institutions.

When we state our conviction that the Fairy-Faith is common to all classes of Celts, we do not state that it is common to all Celts. The materialization of the age has affected the Fairy-Faith as it has affected all religious beliefs the world over. This has been pointed out by Dr. Hyde, by Dr. Carmichael, and by Mr. Jenner in their respective introductions for Ireland, Scotland, and Cornwall. Nevertheless, the Fairy-Faith as the folk-religion of the Celtic peoples is still able to count its adherents by hundreds of thousands. Even in many cases where Christian theology has been partially or wholly discarded by educated Celts, in the country or in the city, as being to them in too many details out of harmony with accepted scientific truths, the belief in fairies has been jealously retained, and will, so it would seem, be retained in the future.

We are now prepared to hear about the *Daoine Maithe*, the ‘Good People’, as the Irish call their *Sidhe* race; about the ‘People of Peace’, the ‘Still-Folk’ or the ‘Silent Moving Folk’, as the Scotch call their *Sìth* who live in green knolls and in the mountain fastnesses of the Highlands; about various Manx fairies; about the *Tylwyth Teg*, the ‘Fair-Family’ or ‘Fair-Folk’, as the Welsh people call their fairies; about Cornish Pixies; and about

*Fées* (fairies), *Corrigans*, and the Phantoms of the Dead in Brittany. And along with these, for they are very much akin, let us hear about ghosts—sometimes about ghosts who discover hidden treasure, as in our story of the *Golden Image*—about goblins, about various sorts of death-warnings generally coming from apparitions of the dead, or from banshees, about death-candles and phantom-funerals, about leprechauns, about hosts of the air, and all kinds of elementals and spirits—in short, about all the orders of beings who mingle together in that invisible realm called Fairyland.

## II. IN IRELAND

Introduction by Douglas Hyde, LL.D., D. Litt., M.R.I.A. (*An Craoibhín Aoibhinn*), President of the Gaelic League; author of *A Literary History of Ireland*, &c.

Whatever may be thought of the conclusions drawn by Mr. Wentz from his explorations into the Irish spirit-world, there can be no doubt as to the accuracy of the data from which he draws them. I have myself been for nearly a quarter of a century collecting, off and on, the folk-lore of Western Ireland, not indeed in the shape in which Mr. Wentz has collected it, but rather with an eye (partly for linguistic and literary purposes) to its songs, sayings, ballads, proverbs, and *sgéalta*, which last are generally the equivalent of the German Märchen, but sometimes have a touch of the saga nature about them. In making a collection of these things I have naturally come across a very large amount of folk-belief conversationally expressed, with regard to the ‘good people’ and other supernatural manifestations, so that I can bear witness to the fidelity with which Mr. Wentz has done his work on Irish soil, for to a great number of the beliefs which he records I have myself heard parallels, sometimes I have heard near variants of the stories, sometimes the identical stories. So we may, I think, unhesitatingly accept his subject-matter, whatever, as I said, be the conclusions we may deduce from them.

The folk-tale (*sean-sgéal*) or Märchen, which I have spent so much time in collecting, must not be confounded with the folk-belief which forms the basis of Mr. Wentz's studies. The *sgéal* or story is something much more intricate, complicated, and thought-out than the belief. One can quite easily distinguish between the two. One (the belief) is short, conversational, chiefly relating to real people, and contains no great sequence of incidents, while the other (the folk-tale) is long, complicated, more or less conventional, and above all has its interest grouped around a single central figure, that of the hero or heroine. I may make this plainer by an example. Let us go into a cottage on the mountain-side, as Mr. Wentz and I have done so often, and ask the old man of the house if he ever heard of such things as fairies, and he will tell you that 'there is fairies in it surely. Didn't his own father see the "forth"<sup>10</sup> beyond full of them, and he passing by of a moonlight night and a little piper among them, and he playing music that mortal man never heard the like?' or he'll tell you that 'he himself wouldn't say agin fairies for it's often he heard their music at the old bush behind the house'. Ask what the fairies are like, and he will tell you—well, pretty much what Mr. Wentz tells us. From this and the like accounts we form our ideas of fairies and fairy music, of ghosts, mermaids, *púcas*, and so on, but there is no sequence of incidents, no hero, no heroine, no story.

Again, ask the old man if he knows e'er a *sean-sgéal* (story or Märchen), and he will ask you at once, 'Did you ever hear the Speckled Bull; did you ever hear the Well at the end of the world; did you ever hear the Tailor and the Three Beasts; did you ever hear the Hornless Cow?' Ask him to relate one of these, and if you get him in the right vein, which may be perhaps one time in ten, or if you induce the right vein, which you may do perhaps nine times out of ten, you will find him begin with a certain gravity and solemnity at the very beginning, thus, 'There was once, in old times and in old times it was, a king in Ireland'; or perhaps 'a man who married a second wife'; or perhaps 'a widow woman with only one son': and the tale proceeds to recount the life and adventures of the heroes or heroines, whose biographies told in Irish in a sort of stereotyped form may take from ten minutes to half an hour to get through. Some stories would

burn out a dip candle in the telling, or even last the whole night. But these stories have little or nothing to say to the questions raised in this book.

The problem we have to deal with is a startling one, as thus put before us by Mr. Wentz. Are these beings of the spirit world real beings, having a veritable existence of their own, in a world of their own, or are they only the creation of the imagination of his informants, and the tradition of bygone centuries? The newspaper, the 'National' School, and the *Zeitgeist* have answered to their own entire satisfaction that these things are imagination pure and simple. Yet this off-hand condemnation does not always carry with it a perfect conviction. We do not doubt the existence of tree-martins or kingfishers, although nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of every thousand pass their entire lives without being vouchsafed a glimpse of them in their live state; and may it not be the same with the creatures of the spirit world, may not they also exist, though to only one in a thousand it be vouchsafed to behold them? The spirit creatures cannot be stuffed and put into museums, like rare animals and birds, whose existence we might doubt of if we had not seen them there; yet they may exist just as such animals and birds do, though we cannot see them. I, at least, have often been tempted to think so. But the following considerations, partly drawn from comparative folk-lore, have made me hesitate about definitely accepting any theory.

In the first place, then, viewing the Irish spirit-world as a whole, we find that it contains, even on Mr. Wentz's showing, quite a number of different orders of beings, of varying shapes, appearances, size, and functions. Are we to believe that all those beings equally exist, and, on the principle that there can be no smoke without a fire, are we to hold that there would be no popular conception of the banshee, the leprechaun, or the *Maighdean-mhara* (sea-maiden, mermaid), and consequently no tales told about them, if such beings did not exist, and from time to time allow themselves to be seen like the wood-martin and the kingfisher? This question is, moreover, further complicated by the belief in the appearance of things that are or appear to be inanimate objects, not living beings, such as the deaf coach or

the phantom ship in full sail, the appearance of which Mr. Yeats has immortalized in one of his earliest and finest poems.

Again, although the *bean-sidhe* (banshee), leprechaun, *púca*, and the like are the most commonly known and usually seen creatures of the spirit world, yet great quantities of other appearances are believed to have been also sporadically met with. I very well remember sitting one night some four or five years ago in an hotel in Indianapolis, U.S.A., and talking to four Irishmen, one or two of them very wealthy, and all prosperous citizens of the United States. The talk happened to turn upon spirits—the only time during my entire American experiences in which such a thing happened—and each man of the four had a story of his own to tell, in which he was a convinced believer, of ghostly manifestations seen by him in Ireland. Two of these manifestations were of beings that would fall into no known category; a monstrous rabbit as big as an ass, which plunged into the sea (rabbits can swim), and a white heifer which ascended to heaven, were two of them. I myself, when a boy of ten or eleven, was perfectly convinced that on a fine early dewy morning in summer when people were still in bed, I saw a strange horse run round a seven-acre field of ours and change into a woman, who ran even swifter than the horse, and after a couple of courses round the field disappeared into our haggard. I am sure, whatever I may believe to-day, no earthly persuasion would, at the time, have convinced me that I did not see this. Yet I never saw it again, and never heard of any one else seeing the same.

My object in mentioning these things is to show that if we concede the real objective existence of, let us say, the apparently well-authenticated banshee (*Bean-sidhe*, ‘woman-fairy’), where are we to stop? for any number of beings, more or less well authenticated, come crowding on her heels, so many indeed that they would point to a far more extensive world of different shapes than is usually suspected, not to speak of inanimate objects like the coach and the ship. Of course there is nothing inherently impossible in all these shapes existing any more than in one of them existing, but they all seem to me to rest upon the same kind of testimony,



stronger in the case of some, less strong in the case of others, and it is as well to point out this clearly.

My own experience is that beliefs in the *Sidhe* (pronounced Shee) folk, and in other denizens of the invisible world is, in many places, rapidly dying. In reading folk-lore collections like those of Mr. Wentz and others, one is naturally inclined to exaggerate the extent and depth of these traditions. They certainly still exist, and can be found if you go to search for them; but they often exist almost as it were by sufferance, only in spots, and are ceasing to be any longer a power. Near my home in a western county (County Roscommon) rises gently a slope, which, owing to the flatness of the surrounding regions, almost becomes a hill, and is a conspicuous object for many miles upon every side. The old people called it in Irish *Mullach na Sidhe*. This name is now practically lost, and it is called Fairymount. So extinct have the traditions of the *Sidhe*-folk, who lived within the hill, become, that a high ecclesiastic recently driving by asked his driver was there an Irish name for the hill, and what was it, and his driver did not know. There took place a few years ago a much talked of bog-slide in the neighbouring townland of Cloon-Sheever (*Sidhbhair* or *Siabhra*), ‘the Meadow of the Fairies,’ and many newspaper correspondents came to view it. One of the natives told a sympathetic newspaper reporter, ‘Sure we always knew it was going to move, that’s why the place is named Cloon-Sheever, the bog was always in a “shiver”!’ I have never been able to hear of any legends attached to what must have at one time been held to be the head-quarters of the *Sidhe* for a score of miles round it.

Of all the beings in the Irish mythological world the *Sidhe* are, however, apparently the oldest and the most distinctive. Beside them in literature and general renown all other beings sink into insignificance. A belief in them formerly dominated the whole of Irish life. The *Sidhe* or Tuatha De Danann were a people like ourselves who inhabited the hills—not as a rule the highest and most salient eminences, but I think more usually the pleasant undulating slopes or gentle hill-sides—and who lived there a life of their own, marrying or giving in marriage, banqueting or making war, and leading there just as real a life as is our own. All Irish literature, particularly

perhaps the ‘Colloquy of the Ancients’ (*Agallamh na Senórach*) abounds with reference to them. To inquire how the Irish originally came by their belief in these beings, the *Sidhe* or Tuatha De Danann, is to raise a question which cannot be answered, any more than one can answer the question, Where did the Romans obtain their belief in Bacchus and the fauns, or the Greeks their own belief in the beings of Olympus?

But granting such belief to have been indigenous to the Irish, as it certainly seems to have been, then the tall, handsome fairies of Ben Bulbin and the Sligo district, about whom Mr. Wentz tells us so much interesting matter, might be accounted for as being a continuation of the tradition of the ancient Gaels, or *a piece of heredity inherent in the folk-imagination*. I mean, in other words, that the tradition about these handsome dwellers within the hill-sides having been handed down for ages, and having been perhaps exceptionally well preserved in those districts, people saw just what they had always been told existed, or, if I may so put it, they saw what they expected to see.

Fin Bheara, the King of the Connacht Fairies in Cnoc Meadha (or Castlehacket) in the County Galway, his Queen Nuala, and all the beautiful forms seen by Mr. Wentz’s seer-witness (pp. 60 ff.), all the banshees and all the human figures, white women, and so forth, who are seen in raths and moats and on hill-sides, are the direct descendants, so to speak, of the Tuatha De Danann or the *Sidhe*. Of this, I think, there can be no doubt whatever.

But then how are we to account for the little red-dressed men and women and the leprechauns? Yet, are they any more wonderful than the pygmies of classic tradition? Is not the Mermaid to be found in Greece, and is not the Lorelei as Germanic as the Kelpy is Caledonian. If we grant that all these are creatures of primitive folk-belief, then how they come to be so ceases to be a Celtic problem, it becomes a world problem. But granted, as I say, that they were all creatures of primitive folk-belief, then their occasional appearances, or the belief in such, may be accounted for in exactly the same way as I have suggested to be possible in the case of the Ben Bulbin fairies.

As for the belief in ghosts or *revenants* (in Irish *tais* or *taidhbhse*), it seems to me that this may possibly rest to some extent upon a different footing altogether. Here we are not confronted by a different order of beings of different shapes and attributes from our own, but only with the appearances, amongst the living, of men who were believed or known to be dead or far away from the scene of their appearances. Even those who may be most sceptical about the *Sidhe*-folk and the leprechauns are likely to be convinced (on the mere evidence) that the existence of ‘astral bodies’ or ‘doubles’, or whatever we may call them, and the appearances of people, especially in the hour of their death, to other people who were perhaps hundreds of miles away at the time, is amply proven. Yet whatever may have been the case originally when man was young, I do not think that this had in later times any more direct bearing upon the belief in the *Sidhe*, the leprechauns, the mermaid, and similar beings than upon the belief in the Greek Pantheon, the naiads, the dryads, or the fauns; all of which beliefs, probably arising originally from an animistic source, must have differentiated themselves at a very early period. Of course every real apparition, every ‘ghost’ apparition, tends now, and must have tended at all times, to strengthen every spirit belief. For do not ghost apparitions belong, in a way, to the same realm as all the others we have spoken of, that is, to a realm equally outside our normal experience?

Another very interesting point, and one hitherto generally overlooked, is this, that different parts of the Irish soil cherish different bodies of supernatural beings. The North of Ireland believes in beings unknown in the South, and North-East Leinster has spirits unknown to the West. Some places seem to be almost given up to special beliefs. Any outsider, for instance, who may have read that powerful and grisly book, *La Légende de la Mort*, by M. Anatole Le Braz, in two large volumes, all about the awful appearances of *Ankou* (Death), who simply dominates the folk-lore of Brittany, will probably be very much astonished to know that, though I have been collecting Irish folk-lore all my life, I have never met Death figuring as a personality in more than two or three tales, and these mostly of a trivial or humorous description, though the Deaf Coach (*Cóiste Bodhar*), the belief

in which is pretty general, does seem a kind of parallel to the creaking cart in which *Ankou* rides.

I would suggest, then, that the restriction of certain forms of spirits, if I may so call them, to certain localities, may be due to race intermixture. I would imagine that where the people of a primitive tribe settled down most strongly, they also most strongly preserved the memory of those supernatural beings who were peculiarly their own. The *Sidhe*-folk appear to be pre-eminently and distinctively Milesian, but the *geancanach* (name of some little spirit in Meath and portion of Ulster) may have been believed in by a race entirely different from that which believed in the *clúracan* (a Munster sprite). Some of these beliefs may be Aryan, but many are probably pre-Celtic.

Is it not strange that while the names and exploits of the great semi-mythological heroes of the various Saga cycles of Ireland, Cuchulainn, Conor mac Nessa, Finn, Osgar, Oisín, and the rest, are at present the inheritance of all Ireland, and are known in every part of it, there should still be, as I have said, supernatural beings believed in which are unknown outside of their own districts, and of which the rest of Ireland has never heard? If the inhabitants of the limited districts in which these are seen still think they see them, my suggestion is that the earlier race handed down an account of the primitive beings believed in by their own tribe, and later generations, if they saw anything, saw just what they were told existed.

Whilst far from questioning the actual existence of certain spiritual forms and apparitions, I venture to throw out these considerations for what they may be worth, and I desire again to thank Mr. Wentz for all the valuable data he has collected for throwing light upon so interesting a question.

Ratra, Frenchpark,

County Roscommon, Ireland,

*September 1910.*

## The Fairy Folk of Tara

On the ancient Hill of Tara, from whose heights the High Kings once ruled all Ireland, from where the sacred fires in pagan days announced the annual resurrection of the sun, the Easter Tide, where the magic of Patrick prevailed over the magic of the Druids, and where the hosts of the Tuatha De Danann were wont to appear at the great Feast of *Samain*, to-day the fairy-folk of modern times hold undisputed sovereignty. And from no point better than Tara, which thus was once the magical and political centre of the Sacred Island, could we begin our study of the Irish Fairy-Faith. Though the Hill has lain unploughed and deserted since the curses of Christian priests fell upon it, on the calm air of summer evenings, at the twilight hour, wondrous music still sounds over its slopes, and at night long, weird processions of silent spirits march round its grass-grown *raths* and *forts*.<sup>11</sup> It is only men who fear the curse of the Christians; the fairy-folk regard it not.

The Rev. Father Peter Kenney, of Kilmessan, had directed me to John Graham, an old man over seventy years of age, who has lived near Tara most of his life; and after I had found John, and he had led me from *rath* to *rath* and then right through the length of the site where once stood the banquet hall of kings and heroes and Druids, as he earnestly described the past glories of Tara to which these ancient monuments bear silent testimony, we sat down in the thick sweet grass on the Sacred Hill and began talking of the olden times in Ireland, and then of the ‘good people’:—

*The ‘Good People’s’ Music.*—‘As sure as you are sitting down I heard the pipes there in that wood (pointing to a wood on the north-west slope of the Hill, and west of the banquet hall). I heard the music another time on a hot summer evening at the Rath of Ringlestown, in a field where all the grass had been burned off; and I often heard it in the wood of Tara. Whenever the *good people* play, you hear their music all through the field as plain as can be; and it is the grandest kind of music. It may last half the night, but once day comes, it ends.’

*Who the ‘Good People’ are.*—I now asked John what sort of a race the ‘good people’ are, and where they came from, and this is his reply:

—‘People killed and murdered in war stay on earth till their time is up, and they are among the *good people*. The souls on this earth are as thick as the grass (running his walking-stick through a thick clump), and you can’t see them; and evil spirits are just as thick, too, and people don’t know it. Because there are so many spirits knocking (going) about they must appear to some people. The old folk saw the *good people* here on the Hill a hundred times, and they’d always be talking about them. The *good people* can see everything, and you dare not meddle with them. They live in *raths*, and their houses are in them. The opinion always was that they are a race of spirits, for they can go into different forms, and can appear big as well as little.’

### **Evidence from Kilmessan, near Tara**

John Boylin, born in County Meath about sixty years ago, will be our witness from Kilmessan, a village about two miles from Tara; and he, being one of the men of the vicinity best informed about its folk-lore, is able to offer testimony of very great value:—

*The Fairy Tribes.*—‘There is said to be a whole tribe of little red men living in Glen Odder, between Ringlestown and Tara; and on long evenings in June they have been heard. There are other breeds or castes of fairies; and it seems to me, when I recall our ancient traditions, that some of these fairies are of the Fir Bolgs, some of the Tuatha De Danann, and some of the Milesians. All of them have been seen serenading round the western slope of Tara, dressed in ancient Irish costumes. Unlike the little red men, these fairy races are warlike and given to making invasions. Long processions of them have been seen going round the King’s Chair (an earthwork on which the Kings of Tara are said to have been crowned); and they then would appear like soldiers of ancient Ireland in review.’

*The Fairy Procession.*—‘We were told as children, that, as soon as night fell, the fairies from Rath Ringlestown would form in a procession, across Tara road, pass round certain bushes which have not been disturbed for

ages, and join the *gangkena* (?) or host of industrious folk, the red fairies. We were afraid, and our nurses always brought us home before the advent of the fairy procession. One of the passes used by this procession happened to be between two mud-wall houses; and it is said that a man went out of one of these houses at the wrong time, for when found he was dead: the fairies had *taken* him because he interfered with their procession.’<sup>12</sup>

*Death through Cutting Fairy-Bushes.*—‘A man named Caffney cut as fuel to boil his pot of potatoes some of these undisturbed bushes round which the fairies pass. When he put the wood under the pot, though it spat fire, and fire-sparkles would come out of it, it would not burn. The man pined away gradually. In six months after cutting the fairy-bushes, he was dead. Just before he died, he told his experiences with the wood to his brother, and his brother told me.’

*The Fairies are the Dead.*—‘According to the local belief, fairies are the spirits of the departed. Tradition says that Hugh O’Neil in the sixteenth century, after his march to the south, encamped his army on the *Rath* or *Fort* of Ringlestown, to be assisted by the spirits of the mighty dead who dwelt within this *rath*. And it is believed that Gerald Fitzgerald has been seen coming out of the Hill of Mollyellen, down in County Louth, leading his horse and dressed in the old Irish costume, with breastplate, spear, and war outfit.’

*Fairy Possession.*—‘Rose Carroll was possessed by a fairy-spirit. It is known that her father held communion with evil spirits, and it appears that they often assisted him. The Carrolls’ house was built at the end of a fairy *fort*, and part of it was scooped out of this *fort*. Rose grew so peculiar that her folks locked her up. After two years she was able to shake off the fairy possession by being taken to Father Robinson’s sisters, and then to an old witch-woman in Drogheda.’

## **In the Valley of the Boyne**

In walking along the River Boyne, from Slane to Knowth and New Grange, I stopped at the cottage of Owen Morgan, at Ross-na-Righ, or ‘the Wood of the Kings’, though the ancient wood has long since disappeared; and as we sat looking out over the sunlit beauty of Ireland’s classic river, and in full view of the first of the famous *moats*, this is what Owen Morgan told me:—

*How the Shoemaker’s Daughter became the Queen of Tara.*—‘In olden times there lived a shoemaker and his wife up there near Moat Knowth, and their first child was taken by the queen of the fairies who lived inside the moat, and a little leprechaun left in its place. The same exchange was made when the second child was born. At the birth of the third child the fairy queen came again and ordered one of her three servants to take the child; but the child could not be moved because of a great beam of iron, too heavy to lift, which lay across the baby’s breast. The second servant and then the third failed like the first, and the queen herself could not move the child. The mother being short of pins had used a needle to fasten the child’s clothes, and that was what appeared to the fairies as a beam of iron, for there was virtue in steel in those days.

‘So the fairy queen decided to bestow gifts upon the child; and advised each of the three servants to give, in turn, a different gift. The first one said, “May she be the grandest lady in the world”; the second one said, “May she be the greatest singer in the world”; and the third one said, “May she be the best mantle-maker in the world.” Then the fairy queen said, “Your gifts are all very good, but I will give a gift of my own better than any of them: the first time she happens to go out of the house let her come back into it under the form of a rat.” The mother heard all that the fairy women said, and so she never permitted her daughter to leave the house.

‘When the girl reached the age of eighteen, it happened that the young prince of Tara, in riding by on a hunt, heard her singing, and so entranced was he with the music that he stopped to listen; and, the song ended, he entered the house, and upon seeing the wonderful beauty of the singer asked her to marry him. The mother said that could not be, and taking the daughter out of the house for the first time brought her back into it in an apron under the form of a rat, that the prince might understand the refusal.



‘This enchantment, however, did not change the prince’s love for the beautiful singer; and he explained how there was a day mentioned with his father, the king, for all the great ladies of Ireland to assemble in the Halls of Tara, and that the grandest lady and the greatest singer and the best mantle-maker would be chosen as his wife. When he added that each lady must come in a chariot, the rat spoke to him and said that he must send to her home, on the day named, four piebald cats and a pack of cards, and that she would make her appearance, provided that at the time her chariot came to the Halls of Tara no one save the prince should be allowed near it; and, she finally said to the prince, “Until the day mentioned with your father, you must carry me as a rat in your pocket.”

‘But before the great day arrived, the rat had made everything known to one of the fairy women, and so when the four piebald cats and the pack of cards reached the girl’s home, the fairies at once turned the cats into the four most splendid horses in the world, and the pack of cards into the most wonderful chariot in the world; and, as the chariot was setting out from the Moat for Tara, the fairy queen clapped her hands and laughed, and the enchantment over the girl was broken, so that she became, as before, the prettiest lady in the world, and she sitting in the chariot.

‘When the prince saw the wonderful chariot coming, he knew whose it was, and went out alone to meet it; but he could not believe his eyes on seeing the lady inside. And then she told him about the witches and fairies, and explained everything.

‘Hundreds of ladies had come to the Halls of Tara from all Ireland, and every one as grand as could be. The contest began with the singing, and ended with the mantle-making, and the young girl was the last to appear; but to the amazement of all the company the king had to give in (admit) that the strange woman was the grandest lady, the greatest singer, and the best mantle-maker in Ireland; and when the old king died she became the Queen of Tara.’

After this ancient legend, which Owen Morgan heard from the old folks when he was a boy, he told me many anecdotes about the ‘good people’ of the Boyne, who are little men usually dressed in red.

*The 'Good People' at New Grange.*—Between Knowth and New Grange I met Maggie Timmons carrying a pail of butter-milk to her calves; and when we stopped on the road to talk, I asked her, in due time, if any of the 'good people' ever appeared in the region, or about New Grange, which we could see in the field, and she replied, in reference to New Grange:—'I am sure the neighbours used to see the *good people* come out of it at night and in the morning. The *good people* inherited the *fort*.'

Then I asked her what the 'good people' are, and she said:—'When they disappear they go like fog; they must be something like spirits, or how could they disappear in that way? I knew of people,' she added, 'who would milk in the fields about here and spill milk on the ground for the *good people*; and pots of potatoes would be put out for the *good people* at night.' (See chap. viii for additional New Grange folk-lore.)

### **The Testimony of an Irish Priest**

We now pass directly to West Ireland, in many ways our most important field, and where of all places in the Celtic world the Fairy-Faith is vigorously alive; and it seems very fitting to offer the first opportunity to testify in behalf of that district to a scholarly priest of the Roman Church, for what he tells us is almost wholly the result of his own memories and experiences as an Irish boy in Connemara, supplemented in a valuable way by his wider and more mature knowledge of the fairy-belief as he sees it now among his own parishioners:—

*Knock Ma Fairies.*—'Knock Ma, which you see over there, is said to contain excavated passages and a palace where the fairies live, and with them the people they have *taken*. And from the inside of the hill there is believed to be an entrance to an underground world. It is a common opinion that after consumptives die they are there with the fairies in good health. The wasted body is not taken into the hill, for it is usually regarded as not the body of the deceased but rather as that of a changeling, the general belief being that the real body and the soul are carried off together, and

those of an old person from Fairyland substituted. The old person left soon declines and dies.'

*Safeguards against Fairies.*—'It was proper when having finished milking a cow to put one's thumb in the pail of milk, and with the wet thumb to make the sign of the cross on the thigh of the cow on the side milked, to be safe against fairies. And I have seen them when churning put a live coal about an inch square under the churn, because it was an old custom connected with fairies.'

*Milk and Butter for Fairies.*—'Whatever milk falls on the ground in milking a cow is taken by the fairies, for fairies need a little milk. Also, after churning, the knife which is run through the butter in drying it must not be scraped clean, for what sticks to it belongs to the fairies. Out of three pounds of butter, for example, an ounce or two would be left for the fairies. I have seen this several times.'

*Crossing a Stream, and Fairies.*—'When out on a dark night, if pursued by fairies or ghosts one is considered quite safe if one can get over some stream. I remember coming home on a dark night with a boy companion and hearing a noise, and then after we had run to a stream and crossed it feeling quite safe.'

*Fairy Preserves.*—'A heap of stones in a field should not be disturbed, though needed for building—especially if they are part of an ancient tumulus. The fairies are said to live inside the pile, and to move the stones would be most unfortunate. If a house happens to be built on a fairy preserve, or in a fairy track, the occupants will have no luck. Everything will go wrong. Their animals will die, their children fall sick, and no end of trouble will come on them. When the house happens to have been built in a fairy track, the doors on the front and back, or the windows if they are in the line of the track, cannot be kept closed at night, for the fairies must march through. Near Ballinrobe there is an old *fort* which is still the preserve of the fairies, and the land round it. The soil is very fine, and yet no one would dare to till it. Some time ago in laying out a new road the engineers determined to run it through the *fort*, but the people rose almost

in rebellion, and the course had to be changed. The farmers wouldn't cut down a tree or bush growing on the hill or preserve for anything.'

*Fairy Control over Crops.*—'Fairies are believed to control crops and their ripening. A field of turnips may promise well, and its owner will count on so many tons to the acre, but if when the crop is gathered it is found to be far short of the estimate, the explanation is that the fairies have extracted so much substance from it. The same thing is the case with corn.'

*November Eve and Fairies.*—'On November Eve it is not right to gather or eat blackberries or sloes, nor after that time as long as they last. On November Eve the fairies pass over all such things and make them unfit to eat. If one dares to eat them afterwards one will have serious illness. We firmly believed this as boys, and I laugh now when I think how we used to gorge ourselves with berries on the last day of October, and then for weeks after pass by bushes full of the most luscious fruit, and with mouths watering for it couldn't eat it.'

*Fairies as Flies.*—'There is an old abbey on the river, in County Mayo, and people say the fairies had a great battle near it, and that the slaughter was tremendous. At the time, the fairies appeared as swarms of flies coming from every direction to that spot. Some came from Knock Ma, and some from South Ireland, the opinion being that fairies can assume any form they like. The battle lasted a day and a night, and when it was over one could have filled baskets with the dead flies which floated down the river.'

*Those who Return from Faerie.*—'Persons in a short trance-state of two or three days' duration are said to be away with the fairies enjoying a festival. The festival may be very material in its nature, or it may be purely spiritual. Sometimes one may thus go to Faerie for an hour or two; or one may remain there for seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years. The mind of a person coming out of Fairyland is usually a blank as to what has been seen and done there. Another idea is that the person knows well enough all about Fairyland, but is prevented from communicating the knowledge. A certain woman of whom I knew said she had forgotten all about her experiences in Faerie, but a friend who heard her objected, and said she did remember, and wouldn't tell. A man may remain awake at night to watch one who has been

to Fairyland to see if that one holds communication with the fairies. Others say in such a case that the fairies know you are on the alert, and will not be discovered.'

### **The Testimony of a Galway Piper**

*Fairies*=*Sidheóga*.—According to our next witness, Steven Ruan, a piper of Galway, with whom I have often talked, there is one class of fairies 'who are nobody else than the spirits of men and women who once lived on earth'; and the banshee is a dead friend, relative, or ancestor who appears to give a warning. 'The fairies', he says, 'never care about old folks. They only *take* babies, and young men and young women. If a young wife dies, she is said to have been *taken* by *them*, and ever afterwards to live in Fairyland. The same things are said about a young man or a child who dies. Fairyland is a place of delights, where music, and singing, and dancing, and feasting are continually enjoyed; and its inhabitants are all about us, as numerous as the blades of grass.'

*A Fairy Dog*.—In the course of another conversation, Steven pointed to a rocky knoll in a field not far from his home, and said:—'I saw a dog with a white ring around his neck by that hill there, and the oldest men round Galway have seen him, too, for he has been here for one hundred years or more. He is a dog of the *good people*, and only appears at certain hours of the night.'

*An Old Piper in Fairyland*.—And before we had done talking, the subject of fairy-music came up, and the following little story coming from one of the last of the old Irish pipers himself, about a brother piper, is of more than ordinary value:—'There used to be an old piper called Flannery who lived in Oranmore, County Galway. I imagine he was one of the old generation. And one time the *good people* took him to Fairyland to learn his profession. He studied music with them for a long time, and when he returned he was as great a piper as any in Ireland. But he died young, for the *good people* wanted him to play for them.'

## The Testimony of 'Old Patsy' of Aranmore

Our next witness is an old man, familiarly called 'Old Patsy', who is a native of the Island of Aranmore, off the coast from Galway, and he lives on the island amid a little group of straw-thatched fishermen's homes called Oak Quarter. As 'Old Patsy' stood beside a rude stone cross near Oak Quarter, in one of those curious places on Aranmore, where each passing funeral stops long enough to erect a little memorial pile of stones on the smooth rocky surface of the roadside enclosure, he told me many anecdotes about the mysteries of his native island.

*Aranmore Fairies.*—Twenty years or so ago round the *Bedd* of Dermot and Grania, just above us on the hill, there were seen many fairies, 'crowds of them,' said 'Old Patsy', and a single deer. They began to chase the deer, and followed it right over the island. At another time similar little people chased a horse. 'The rocks were full of them, and they were small fellows.'

*A Fairy Beating—in a Dream.*—'In the South Island,' he continued, 'as night was coming on, a man was giving his cow water at a well, and, as he looked on the other side of a wall, he saw many strange people playing hurley. When they noticed him looking at them, one came up and struck the cow a hard blow, and turning on the man cut his face and body very badly. The man might not have been so badly off, but he returned to the well after the first encounter and got five times as bad a beating; and when he reached home he couldn't speak at all, until the cock crew. Then he told about his adventures, and slept a little. When he woke up in the daylight he was none the worse for his beating, for the fairies had rubbed something on his face.' Patsy says he knew the man, who if still alive is now in America, where he went several years ago.

*Where Fairies Live.*—When I asked Patsy where the fairies live, he turned half around, and pointing in the direction of Dun Aengus, which was in full view on the sharp sky-line of Aranmore, said that there, in a large tumulus on the hill-side below it, they had one of their favourite abodes.

But, he added, ‘The rocks are full of them, and they are small fellows.’ Just across the road from where we were standing, in a spot near Oak Quarter, another place was pointed out where the fairies are often seen dancing. The name of it is *Moneen an Damhsa*, ‘the Little Bog of the Dance.’ Other sorts of fairies live in the sea; and some of them who live on Aranmore (probably in conjunction with those in the sea) go out over the water and cause storms and wind.

### **The Testimony of a Roman Catholic Theologian**

The following evidence, by the Rev. Father——, came out during a discussion concerning spirits and fairies as regarded by Roman Catholic theology, which he and I enjoyed when we met as fellow travellers in Galway Town:—

*Of Magic and Place-spirits.*—‘Magic, according to Catholic theology, is nothing else than the solicitation of spiritual powers to help us. If evil spirits are evoked by certain irrational practices it is unholy magic, and this is altogether forbidden by our Church. All charms, spells, divination, necromancy, or geomancy are unholy magic. Holy magic is practised by carrying the Cross in Christ. Now evil magic has been practised here in Ireland: butter has been *taken* so that none came from the churning; cows have been made to die of maladies; and fields made unproductive. A cow was bought from an old woman in Connemara, and no butter was ever had from the cow until exorcism with holy water was performed. This is reported to me as a fact.’ And in another relation the Rev. Father—— said what for us is highly significant:—‘My private opinion is that in certain places here in Ireland where pagan sacrifices were practised, evil spirits through receiving homage gained control, and still hold control, unless driven out by exorcisms.’

### **The Testimony of the Town Clerk of Tuam**

To the town clerk of Tuam, Mr. John Glynn, who since his boyhood has taken a keen interest in the traditions of his native county, I am indebted for the following valuable summary of the fairy creed in that part of North Galway where Finvara rules:—

*Fairies of the Tuam Country.*—‘The whole of Knock Ma (*Cnoc Meadha*<sup>13</sup>), which probably means Hill of the Plain, is said to be the palace of Finvara, king of the Connaught fairies. There are a good many legends about Finvara, but very few about Queen Meave in this region.’

*Famine of 1846–7 caused by Fairies.*—‘During 1846–7 the potato crop in Ireland was a failure, and very much suffering resulted. At the time, the country people in these parts attributed the famine to disturbed conditions in the fairy world. Old Thady Steed once told me about the conditions then prevailing, “Sure, we couldn’t be any other way; and I saw the *good people* and hundreds besides me saw them fighting in the sky over Knock Ma and on towards Galway.” And I heard others say they saw the fighting also.’

*Fairyland; and the Seeress.*—‘Fairies are said to be immortal, and the fairy world is always described as an immaterial place, though I do not think it is the same as the world of the dead. Sick persons, however, are often said to be with the fairies, and when cured, to have come back. A woman who died here about thirty years ago was commonly believed to have been with the fairies during her seven years’ sickness when she was a maiden. She married after coming back, and had children; and she was always able to see the *good people* and to talk with them, for she had the second-sight. And it is said that she used to travel with the fairies at night. After her marriage she lived in Tuam, and though her people were six or seven miles out from Tuam in the country, she could always tell all that was taking place with them there, and she at her own home at the time.’

*Fairies on May Day.*—‘On May Day the *good people* can steal butter if the chance is given them. If a person enters a house then, and churning is going on, he must take a hand in it, or else there will be no butter. And if fire is given away on May Day nothing will go right for the whole year.’

*The Three Fairy Drops.*—‘Even yet certain things are due the fairies; for example, two years ago, in the Court Room here in Tuam, a woman was



on trial for watering milk, and to the surprise of us all who were conducting the proceedings, and, it can be added, to the great amusement of the onlookers, she swore that she had only added “the three fairy drops”.’

*Food of Fairies.*—‘Food, after it has been put out at night for the fairies, is not allowed to be eaten afterwards by man or beast, not even by pigs. Such food is said to have no real substance left in it, and to let anything eat it wouldn’t be thought of. The underlying idea seems to be that the fairies extract the spiritual essence from food offered to them, leaving behind the grosser elements.’

*Fairy Warfare.*—‘When the fairy tribes under the various kings and queens have a battle, one side manages to have a living man among them, and he by knocking the fairies about turns the battle in case the side he is on is losing. It is always usual for the Munster fairy king to challenge Finvara, the Connaught fairy king.’

### **County Sligo, and the Testimony of a Peasant Seer<sup>14</sup>**

The Ben Bulbin country in County Sligo is one of those rare places in Ireland where fairies are thought to be visible, and our first witness from there claims to be able to see the fairies or ‘gentry’ and to talk with them. This mortal so favoured lives in the same townland where his fathers have lived during four hundred years, directly beneath the shadows of Ben Bulbin, on whose sides Dermot is said to have been killed while hunting the wild-boar. And this famous old mountain, honeycombed with curious grottoes ages ago when the sea beat against its perpendicular flanks, is the very place where the ‘gentry’ have their chief abode. Even on its broad level summit, for it is a high square tableland like a mighty cube of rock set down upon the earth by some antediluvian god, there are treacherous holes, wherein more than one hunter may have been lost for ever, penetrating to unknown depths; and by listening one can hear the tides from the ocean three or four miles away surging in and out through ancient subterranean channels, connected with these holes. In the neighbouring mountains there

are long caverns which no man has dared to penetrate to the end, and even dogs, it is said, have been put in them never to emerge, or else to come out miles away.

One day when the heavy white fog-banks hung over Ben Bulbin and its neighbours, and there was a weird almost-twilight at midday over the purple heather bog-lands at their base, and the rain was falling, I sat with my friend before a comfortable fire of fragrant turf in his cottage and heard about the ‘gentry’:—

*Encounters with the ‘Gentry’.*—‘When I was a young man I often used to go out in the mountains over there (pointing out of the window in their direction) to fish for trout, or to hunt; and it was in January on a cold, dry day while carrying my gun that I and a friend with me, as we were walking around Ben Bulbin, saw one of the *gentry* for the first time. I knew who it was, for I had heard the *gentry* described ever since I could remember; and this one was dressed in blue with a head-dress adorned with what seemed to be frills.<sup>15</sup> When he came up to us, he said to me in a sweet and silvery voice, “The seldomer you come to this mountain the better. A young lady here wants to take you away.” Then he told us not to fire off our guns, because the *gentry* dislike being disturbed by the noise. And he seemed to be like a soldier of the *gentry* on guard. As we were leaving the mountains, he told us not to look back, and we didn’t. Another time I was alone trout-fishing in nearly the same region when I heard a voice say, “It is——barefooted and fishing.” Then there came a whistle like music and a noise like the beating of a drum, and soon one of the *gentry* came and talked with me for half an hour. He said, “Your mother will die in eleven months, and do not let her die unanointed.” And she did die within eleven months. As he was going away he warned me, “You must be in the house before sunset. Do not delay! Do not delay! They can do nothing to you until I get back in the castle.” As I found out afterwards, he was going to *take* me, but hesitated because he did not want to leave my mother alone. After these warnings I was always afraid to go to the mountains, but lately I have been told I could go if I took a friend with me.’

*'Gentry' Protection.*—‘The *gentry* have always befriended and protected me. I was drowned twice but for them. Once I was going to Durnish Island, a mile off the coast. The channel is very deep, and at the time there was a rough sea, with the tide running out, and I was almost lost. I shrieked and shouted, and finally got safe to the mainland. The day I talked with one of the *gentry* at the foot of the mountain when he was for *taking* me, he mentioned this, and said they were the ones who saved me from drowning then.’

*'Gentry' Stations.*—‘Especially in Ireland, the *gentry* live inside the mountains in beautiful castles; and there are a good many branches of them in other countries. Like armies, they have various stations and move from one to another. Some live in the Wicklow Mountains near Dublin.’

*'Gentry' Control Over Human Affairs.*—‘The *gentry* take a great interest in the affairs of men, and they always stand for justice and right. Any side they favour in our wars, that side wins. They favoured the Boers, and the Boers did get their rights. They told me they favoured the Japanese and not the Russians, because the Russians are tyrants. Sometimes they fight among themselves. One of them once said, “I’d fight for a friend, or I’d fight for Ireland.”’

*The 'Gentry' Described.*—In response to my wish, this description of the ‘*gentry*’ was given:—‘The folk are the grandest I have ever seen. They are far superior to us, and that is why they are called the *gentry*. They are not a working class, but a military-aristocratic class, tall and noble-appearing. They are a distinct race between our own and that of spirits, as they have told me. Their qualifications are tremendous. “We could cut off half the human race, but would not,” they said, “for we are expecting salvation.” And I knew a man three or four years ago whom they struck down with paralysis. Their sight is so penetrating that I think they could see through the earth. They have a silvery voice, quick and sweet. The music they play is most beautiful. They *take* the whole body and soul of young and intellectual people who are interesting, transmuting the body to a body like their own. I asked them once if they ever died, and they said, “No; we are always kept young.” Once they take you and you taste food in their

palace you cannot come back. You are changed to one of them, and live with them for ever. They are able to appear in different forms. One once appeared to me, and seemed only four feet high, and stoutly built. He said, "I am bigger than I appear to you now. We can make the old young, the big small, the small big." One of their women told all the secrets of my family. She said that my brother in Australia would travel much and suffer hardships, all of which came true; and foretold that my nephew, then about two years old, would become a great clergyman in America, and that is what he is now. Besides the *gentry*, who are a distinct class, there are bad spirits and ghosts, which are nothing like them. My mother once saw a leprechaun beside a bush hammering. He disappeared before she could get to him, but he also was unlike one of the *gentry*.'<sup>16</sup>

### Evidence from Grange

Our next witness, who lives about three miles from our last witness, is Hugh Currid, the oldest man in Grange; and so old is he that now he does little more than sit in the chimney-corner smoking, and, as he looks at the red glow of the peat, dreaming of the olden times. Hugh knows English very imperfectly, and so what he narrated was in the ancient Gaelic which his fathers spoke. When Father Hines took me to Hugh's cottage, Hugh was in his usual silent pose before the fire. At first he rather resented having his thoughts disturbed, but in a few minutes he was as talkative as could be, for there is nothing like the mention of Ireland to get him started. The Father left us then; and with the help of Hugh's sister as an interpreter I took down what he said:—

*The Flax-Seller's Return from Faerie.*—'An old woman near Lough More, where Father Patrick was drowned,<sup>17</sup> who used to make her living by selling flax at the market, was *taken* by the *gentry*, and often came back afterwards to her three children to comb their hair. One time she told a neighbour that the money she saved from her dealings in flax would be

found near a big rock on the lake-shore, which she indicated, and that she wanted the three children to have it.'

*A Wife Recovered from the 'Gentry'.*—'A man's young wife died in confinement while he was absent on some business at Ballingshaun, and one of the *gentry* came to him and said she had been *taken*. The husband hurried home, and that night he sat with the body of his wife all alone. He left the door open a little, and it wasn't long before his wife's spirit came in and went to the cradle where her child was sleeping. As she did so, the husband threw at her a charm of hen's dung which he had ready, and this held her until he could call the neighbours. And while they were coming, she went back into her body, and lived a long time afterwards. The body was stiff and cold when the husband arrived home, though it hadn't been washed or dressed.'

### **A Tailor's Testimony**

Our next witness is Patrick Waters, by trade a tailor, living in Cloontipruckilish, a cross-road hamlet less than two miles from Hugh Currid's home. His first story is a parallel to one told about the minister of Aberfoyle who was *taken* by the 'good people' (pp. 89 ff.):—

*The Lost Bride.*—'A girl in this region died on her wedding-night while dancing. Soon after her death she appeared to her husband, and said to him, "I'm not dead at all, but I am put from you now for a time. It may be a long time, or a short time, I cannot tell. I am not badly off. If you want to get me back you must stand at the gap near the house and catch me as I go by, for I live near there, and see you, and you do not see me." He was anxious enough to get her back, and didn't waste any time in getting to the gap. When he came to the place, a party of strangers were just coming out, and his wife soon appeared as plain as could be, but he couldn't stir a hand or foot to save her. Then there was a scream and she was gone. The man firmly believed this, and would not marry again.'

*The Invisible Island.*—‘There is an enchanted island which is an invisible island between Innishmurray and the mainland opposite. It is only seen once in seven years. I saw it myself, and so did four or five others with me. A boatman from Sligo named Carr took two strange men with him towards Innishmurray, and they disappeared at the spot where the island is, and he thought they had fallen overboard and been drowned. Carr saw one of the same men in Connelly (County Donegal), some six months or so after, and with great surprise said to him, “Will you tell me the wonders of the world? Is it you I saw drowned near Innishmurray?” “Yes,” he said; and then asked, “Do you see me?” “Yes,” answered Carr. “But,” said the man again, “you do not see me with both eyes?” Then Carr closed one eye to be sure, and found that he saw him with one eye only. And he told the man which one it was. At this information the fairy man blew on Carr’s face, and Carr never saw him again.’

*A Dream.*—‘My father dreamt he saw two armies coming in from the sea, walking on the water. Reaching the strand, they lined up and commenced a battle, and my father was in great terror. The fighting was long and bloody, and when it was over every fighter vanished, the wounded and dead as well as the survivors. The next morning an old woman who had the reputation of talking with the fairies came in the house to my father, who, though greatly disturbed over the dream, had told us nothing of it, and asked him, “Have you anything to tell? I couldn’t but laugh at you,” she added, and before my father could reply, continued, “Well, Jimmy, you won’t tell the news, so I will.” And then she began to tell about the battle. “Ketty!” exclaimed my father at this, “can it be true? And who were the men beside me?” When Ketty told him, they turned out to be some of his dead friends. She received her information from a drowned man whom she met on the spot where the *gentry* armies had come ashore; and, in the place where they fought, the sand was all burnt red, as from fire.’

As the narrator reflected on this dream story, he remarked about dreams generally:—‘The reason our dreams appear different from what they are is because while in them we can’t touch the body and transform it. People believe themselves to be with the dead in dreams.’

During September 1909, when I had several fresh interviews with Patrick Waters, I verified all of his 1908 testimony such as it appears above; and among unimportant anecdotes I have omitted from the matter taken down in 1908 one anecdote about our seer-witness from County Sligo, because it proved to be capable of opposite interpretations. Patrick Waters, however, like many of his neighbours, thoroughly supports Hugh Currid's opinion that our seer-witness 'surely sees something, and it must be the *gentry*'; and of Hugh Currid himself, Patrick Waters said, 'Hugh Currid did surely see the *gentry*; he saw them passing this way like a blast of wind.' Patrick's fresh testimony now follows, the story about Father Patrick and Father Dominick coming first:—

*Father Patrick and Father Dominick.*—'Father Patrick Noan while bathing in the harbour at Carns (about three miles north-west of Grange) was drowned. His body was soon brought ashore, and his brother, Father Dominick Noan, was sent for. When Father Dominick arrived, one of the men who had collected around the body said to him, "Why don't you do something for your brother Patrick?" "Why don't somebody ask me?" he replied, "for I must be asked in the name of God." So Jimmy McGowan went on his knees and asked for the honour of God that Father Dominick should bring Father Patrick back to life; and, at this, Father Dominick took out his breviary and began to read. After a time he whistled, and began to read again. He whistled a second time, and returned to the reading. Upon his whistling the third time, Father Patrick's spirit appeared in the doorway.

"Where were you when I whistled the first time?" Father Dominick asked. "I was at a hurling match with the *gentry* on Mulloughmore strand." "And where were you at the second whistle?" "I was coming over Corrick Fadda; and when you whistled the third time I was here at the door." Father Patrick's spirit had gone back into the body, and Father Patrick lived round here as a priest for a long time afterwards.

'There was no such thing as artificial respiration known hereabouts when this happened some fifty or sixty years ago. I heard this story, which I know is true, from many persons who saw Father Dominick restore his brother to life.'

*A Druid Enchantment.*—After this strange psychical narrative, there followed the most weird legend I have heard in Celtic lands about Druids and magic. One afternoon Patrick Waters pointed out to me the field, near the sea-coast opposite Innishmurray, in which the ancient menhir containing the ‘enchantment’ used to stand; and, at another time, he said that a bronze wand covered with curious marks (or else interlaced designs) was found not far from the ruined dolmen and *allée couverte* on the farm of Patrick Bruan, about two miles southward. This last statement, like the story itself, I have been unable to verify in any way.

‘In times before Christ there were Druids here who enchanted one another with Druid rods made of brass, and metamorphosed one another into stone and lumps of oak. The question is, Where are the spirits of these Druids now? Their spirits are wafted through the air, and the man or beast they meet is smitten, while their own bodies are still under enchantment. I had such a Druid enchantment in my hand; it wasn’t stone, nor marble, nor flint, and had human shape. It was found in the centre of a big rock on Innis-na-Gore; and round this rock light used to appear at night. The man who owned the stone decided to blast it up, and he found at its centre the enchantment—just like a man, with head and legs and arms.<sup>18</sup> Father Healy took the enchantment away, when he was here on a visit, and said that it was a Druid enchanted, and that to get out of the rock was one part of the releasement, and that there would be a second and complete releasement of the Druid.’

*The Fairy Tribes Classified.*—Finally I asked Patrick to classify, as far as he could, all the fairy tribes he had ever heard about, and he said:—‘The leprechaun is a red-capped fellow who stays round pure springs, generally shoemaking for the rest of the fairy tribes. The lunantishees are the tribes that guard the blackthorn trees or sloes; they let you cut no stick on the eleventh of November (the original November Day), or on the eleventh of May (the original May Day). If at such a time you cut a blackthorn, some misfortune will come to you. Pookas are black-featured fellows mounted on good horses; and are horse-dealers. They visit racecourses, but usually are invisible. The *gentry* are the most noble tribe of all; and they are a big race



who came from the planets—according to my idea; they usually appear white. The *Daoine Maithe* (though there is some doubt, the same or almost the same as the *gentry*) were next to Heaven at the Fall, but did not fall; they are a people expecting salvation.’

### **Bridget O’Conner’s Testimony**

Our next witness is Bridget O’Conner, a near neighbour to Patrick Waters, in Cloontipruckilish. When I approached her neat little cottage she was cutting sweet-pea blossoms with a pair of scissors, and as I stopped to tell her how pretty a garden she had, she searched out the finest white bloom she could find and gave it to me. After we had talked a little while about America and Ireland, she said I must come in and rest a few minutes, and so I did; and it was not long before we were talking about fairies:—

*The Irish Legend of the Dead.*—‘Old Peggy Gillin, dead these thirty years, who lived a mile beyond Grange, used to cure people with a secret herb shown to her by her brother, dead of a fairy-stroke. He was drowned and *taken* by the fairies, in the big drowning here during the herring season. She would pull the herb herself and prepare it by mixing spring water with it. Peggy could always talk with her dead relatives and friends, and continually with her brother, and she would tell everybody that they were with the fairies. Her daughter, Mary Short, who inherited some of her mother’s power, died here about three or four years ago.

‘I remember, too, about Mary Leonard and her daughter, Nancy Waters. Both of them are dead now. The daughter was the first to die, as it happened, and in child-birth. When she was gone, her mother used to wail and cry in an awful manner; and one day the daughter appeared to her in the garden, and said, “The more you wail for me, the more I am in torment. Pray for me, but do not wail.”’

*A Midwife Story.*—‘A country nurse was requested by a strange man on horseback to go with him to exercise her profession; and she went with him to a castle she didn’t know. When the baby was born, every woman in the

place where the event happened put her finger in a basin of water and rubbed her eyes, and so the nurse put her finger in and rubbed it on one of her eyes. She went home and thought no more about it. But one day she was at the fair in Grange and saw some of the same women who were in the castle when the baby was born; though, as she noticed, she only could see them with the one eye she had wet with the water from the basin. The nurse spoke to the women, and they wanted to know how she recognized them; and she, in reply, said it was with the one eye, and asked, "How is the baby?" "Well," said one of the fairy women; "and what eye do you see us with?" "With the left eye," answered the nurse. Then the fairy woman blew her breath against the nurse's left eye, and said, "You'll never see me again." And the nurse was always blind in the left eye after that.'

### **The Spirit World at Carns**

The Carns or Mount Temple country, about three miles from Grange, County Sligo, has already been mentioned by witnesses as a 'gentry' haunt, and so now we shall hear what one of its oldest and most intelligent native inhabitants says of it. John McCann had been referred to, by Patrick Waters, as one who knows much about the 'gentry' at first hand, and we can be sure that what he offers us is thoroughly reliable evidence. For many years, John McCann, born in 1830, by profession a carpenter and boat-builder, has been official mail-carrier to Innishmurray; and he knows quite as much about the strange little island and the mainland opposite it as any man living. His neat little cottage is on the shore of the bay opposite the beautiful fairy-haunted Darnish Island; and, as we sat within it beside a brilliant peat fire, and surrounded by all the family, this is what was told me:—

*A 'Gentry' Medium.*—'Ketty Rourk (or Queenan) could tell all that would happen—funerals, weddings, and so forth. Sure some spirits were coming to her. She said they were the *gentry*; that the *gentry* are everywhere; and that my drowned uncles and grandfather and other dead are among them. A drowned man named Pat Nicholson was her adviser. He

used to live just a mile from here; and she knew him before he was drowned.'

Here we have, clearly enough, a case of 'mediumship', or of communication with the dead, as in modern Spiritualism. And the following story, which like this last has numerous Irish parallels, illustrates an ancient and world-wide animistic belief, that in sickness—as in dreams—the soul goes out of the body as at death, and meets the dead in their own fairy world.

*The Clairvoyance of Mike Farrell.*—'Mike Farrell, too, could tell all about the *gentry*, as he lay sick a long time. And he told about Father Brannan's youth, and even the house in Roscommon in which the Father was born; and Father Brannan never said anything more against Mike after that. Mike surely saw the *gentry*; and he was with them during his illness for twelve months. He said they live in *forts* and at Alt Darby ("the Big Rock"). After he got well, he went to America, at the time of the famine.'

*The 'Gentry' Army.*—'The *gentry* were believed to live up on this hill (Hill of the Brocket Stones, *Cluach-a-brac*), and from it they would come out like an army and march along the road to the strand. Very few persons could see them. They were thought to be like living people, but in different dress. They seemed like soldiers, yet it was known they were not living beings such as we are.'

*The Seership of Dan Quinn.*—'On Connor's Island (about two miles southward from Carns by the mainland) my uncle, Dan Quinn, often used to see big crowds of the *gentry* come into his house and play music and dance. The house would be full of them, but they caused him no fear. Once on such an occasion, one of them came up to him as he lay in bed, and giving him a green leaf told him to put it in his mouth. When he did this, instantly he could not see the *gentry*, but could still hear their music. Uncle Dan always believed he recognized in some of the *gentry* his drowned friends. Only when he was alone would the *gentry* visit him. He was a silent old man, and so never talked much; but I know that this story is as true as can be, and that the *gentry* always took an interest in him.'

## Under the Shadow of Ben Bulbin and Ben Waskin

I was driving along the Ben Bulbin road, on the ocean side, with Michael Oates, who was on his way from his mountain-side home to the lowlands to cut hay; and as we looked up at the ancient mountain, so mysterious and silent in the shadows and fog of a calm early morning of summer, he told me about its invisible inhabitants:—

*The ‘Gentry’ Huntsmen.*—‘I knew a man who saw the *gentry* hunting on the other side of the mountain. He saw hounds and horsemen cross the road and jump the hedge in front of him, and it was one o’clock at night. The next day he passed the place again, and looked for the tracks of the huntsmen, but saw not a trace of tracks at all.’

*The ‘Taking’ of the Turf-Cutter.*—After I had heard about two boys who were drowned opposite Innishmurray, and who afterwards appeared as apparitions, for the *gentry* had them, this curious story was related:—‘A man was cutting turf out on the side of Ben Bulbin when a strange man came to him and said, “You have cut enough turf for to-day. You had better stop and go home.” The turf-cutter looked around in surprise, and in two seconds the strange man had disappeared; but he decided to go home. And as soon as he was home, such a feeling came over him that he could not tell whether he was alive or dead. Then he took to his bed and never rose again.’

*Hearing the ‘Gentry’ Music.*—At this Michael said to his companion in the cart with us, William Barber, ‘You tell how you heard the music’; and this followed:—‘One dark night, about one o’clock, myself and another young man were passing along the road up there round Ben Bulbin, when we heard the finest kind of music. All sorts of music seemed to be playing. We could see nothing at all, though we thought we heard voices like children’s. It was the music of the *gentry* we heard.’

My next friend to testify is Pat Ruddy, eighty years old, one of the most intelligent and prosperous farmers living beside Ben Bulbin. He greeted me in the true Irish way, but before we could come to talk about fairies his good wife induced me to enter another room where she had secretly

prepared a great feast spread out on a fresh white cloth, while Pat and myself had been exchanging opinions about America and Ireland. When I returned to the kitchen the whole family were assembled round the blazing turf fire, and Pat was soon talking about the ‘gentry’:—

*Seeing the ‘Gentry’ Army.*—‘Old people used to say the *gentry* were in the mountains; that is certain, but I never could be quite sure of it myself. One night, however, near midnight, I did have a sight: I set out from Bantrillick to come home, and near Ben Bulbin there was the greatest army you ever saw, five or six thousand of them in armour shining in the moonlight. A strange man rose out of the hedge and stopped me, for a minute, in the middle of the road. He looked into my face, and then let me go.’

*An Ossianic Fragment.*—‘A man went away with the *good people* (or *gentry*), and returned to find the townland all in ruins. As he came back riding on a horse of the *good people*, he saw some men in a quarry trying to move a big stone. He helped them with it, but his saddle-girth broke, and he fell to the ground. The horse ran away, and he was left there, an old man’<sup>19</sup> (cf. pp. 346–7).

### **A Schoolmaster’s Testimony**

A schoolmaster, who is a native of the Ben Bulbin country, offers this testimony:—‘There is implicit belief here in the *gentry*, especially among the old people. They consider them the spirits of their departed relations and friends, who visit them in joy and in sorrow. On the death of a member of a family, they believe the spirits of their near relatives are present; they do not see them, but feel their presence. They even have a strong belief that the spirits show them the future in dreams; and say that cases of affliction are always foreshown in a dream.

‘The belief in changelings is not now generally prevalent; but in olden times a mother used to place a pair of iron tongs over the cradle before leaving the child alone, in order that the fairies should not change the child

for a weakly one of their own. It was another custom to take a wisp of straw, and, lighting one end of it, make a fiery sign of the cross over a cradle before a babe could be placed in it.’

### **With the Irish Mystics in the *Sidhe* World**

Let us now turn to the Rosses Point country, which, as we have already said, is one of the very famous places for seeing the ‘gentry’, or, as educated Irish seers who make pilgrimages thither call them, the *Sidhe*. I have been told by more than one such seer that there on the hills and Greenlands (a great stretch of open country, treeless and grass-grown), and on the strand at Lower Rosses Point—called Wren Point by the country-folk—these beings can be seen and their wonderful music heard; and a well-known Irish artist has shown me many drawings, and paintings in oil, of these *Sidhe* people as he has often beheld them at those places and elsewhere in Ireland. They are described as a race of majestic appearance and marvellous beauty, in form human, yet in nature divine. The highest order of them seems to be a race of beings evolved to a superhuman plane of existence, such as the ancients called gods; and with this opinion, strange as it may seem in this age, all the educated Irish seers with whom I have been privileged to talk agree, though they go further, and say that these highest *Sidhe* races still inhabiting Ireland are the ever-young, immortal divine race known to the ancient men of Erin as the Tuatha De Danann.

Of all European lands I venture to say that Ireland is the most mystical, and, in the eyes of true Irishmen, as much the Magic Island of Gods and Initiates now as it was when the Sacred Fires flashed from its purple, heather-covered mountain-tops and mysterious round towers, and the Greater Mysteries drew to its hallowed shrines neophytes from the West as well as from the East, from India and Egypt as well as from Atlantis;<sup>20</sup> and Erin’s mystic-seeing sons still watch and wait for the relighting of the Fires and the restoration of the old Druidic Mysteries. Herein I but imperfectly echo the mystic message Ireland’s seers gave me, a pilgrim to their Sacred

Isle. And until this mystic message is interpreted, men cannot discover the secret of Gaelic myth and song in olden or in modern times, they cannot drink at the ever-flowing fountain of Gaelic genius, the perennial source of inspiration which lies behind the new revival of literature and art in Ireland, nor understand the seeming reality of the fairy races.

### **An Irish Mystic's Testimony**

Through the kindness of an Irish mystic, who is a seer, I am enabled to present here, in the form of a dialogue, very rare and very important evidence, which will serve to illustrate and to confirm what has just been said above about the mysticism of Ireland. To anthropologists this evidence may be of more than ordinary value when they know that it comes from one who is not only a cultured seer but who is also a man conspicuously successful in the practical life of a great city:—

*Visions.*—

Q.—Are all visions which you have had of the same character?

A.—‘I have always made a distinction between pictures seen in the memory of nature and visions of actual beings now existing in the inner world. We can make the same distinction in our world: I may close my eyes and see you as a vivid picture in memory, or I may look at you with my physical eyes and see your actual image. In seeing these beings of which I speak, the physical eyes may be open or closed: mystical beings in their own world and nature are never seen with the physical eyes.’

*Otherworlds.*—

Q.—By the inner world do you mean the Celtic Otherworld?

A.—‘Yes; though there are many Otherworlds. The *Tír-na-nog* of the ancient Irish, in which the races of the *Sidhe* exist, may be described as a radiant archetype of this world, though this definition does not at all express its psychic nature. In *Tír-na-nog* one sees nothing save harmony and beautiful forms. There are other worlds in which we can see horrible shapes.’

*Classification of the 'Sidhe'.—*

Q.—Do you in any way classify the *Sidhe* races to which you refer?

A.—‘The beings whom I call the *Sidhe*, I divide, as I have seen them, into two great classes: those which are shining, and those which are opalescent and seem lit up by a light within themselves. The shining beings appear to be lower in the hierarchies; the opalescent beings are more rarely seen, and appear to hold the positions of great chiefs or princes among the tribes of Dana.’

*Conditions of Seership.—*

Q.—Under what state or condition and where have you seen such beings?

A.—‘I have seen them most frequently after being away from a city or town for a few days. The whole west coast of Ireland from Donegal to Kerry seems charged with a magical power, and I find it easiest to see while I am there. I have always found it comparatively easy to see visions while at ancient monuments like New Grange and Dowth, because I think such places are naturally charged with psychical forces, and were for that reason made use of long ago as sacred places. I usually find it possible to throw myself into the mood of seeing; but sometimes visions have forced themselves upon me.’

*The Shining Beings.—*

Q.—Can you describe the shining beings?

A.—‘It is very difficult to give any intelligible description of them. The first time I saw them with great vividness I was lying on a hill-side alone in the west of Ireland, in County Sligo: I had been listening to music in the air, and to what seemed to be the sound of bells, and was trying to understand these aerial clashings in which wind seemed to break upon wind in an ever-changing musical silvery sound. Then the space before me grew luminous, and I began to see one beautiful being after another.’

*The Opalescent Beings.—*

Q.—Can you describe one of the opalescent beings?

A.—‘The first of these I saw I remember very clearly, and the manner of its appearance: there was at first a dazzle of light, and then I saw that this



came from the heart of a tall figure with a body apparently shaped out of half-transparent or opalescent air, and throughout the body ran a radiant, electrical fire, to which the heart seemed the centre. Around the head of this being and through its waving luminous hair, which was blown all about the body like living strands of gold, there appeared flaming wing-like auras. From the being itself light seemed to stream outwards in every direction; and the effect left on me after the vision was one of extraordinary lightness, joyousness, or ecstasy.

‘At about this same period of my life I saw many of these great beings, and I then thought that I had visions of Aengus, Manannan, Lug, and other famous kings or princes among the Tuatha De Danann; but since then I have seen so many beings of a similar character that I now no longer would attribute to any one of them personal identity with particular beings of legend; though I believe that they correspond in a general way to the Tuatha De Danann or ancient Irish gods.’

*Stature of the ‘Sidhe’.*—

Q.—You speak of the opalescent beings as great beings; what stature do you assign to them, and to the shining beings?

A.—‘The opalescent beings seem to be about fourteen feet in stature, though I do not know why I attribute to them such definite height, since I had nothing to compare them with; but I have always considered them as much taller than our race. The shining beings seem to be about our own stature or just a little taller. Peasant and other Irish seers do not usually speak of the *Sidhe* as being little, but as being tall: an old schoolmaster in the West of Ireland described them to me from his own visions as tall beautiful people, and he used some Gaelic words, which I took as meaning that they were shining with every colour.’

*The worlds of the ‘Sidhe’.*—

Q.—Do the two orders of *Sidhe* beings inhabit the same world?

A.—‘The shining beings belong to the mid-world; while the opalescent beings belong to the heaven-world. There are three great worlds which we can see while we are still in the body: the earth-world, mid-world, and heaven-world.’

*Nature of the 'Sidhe.'*—

Q.—Do you consider the life and state of these *Sidhe* beings superior to the life and state of men?

A.—‘I could never decide. One can say that they themselves are certainly more beautiful than men are, and that their worlds seem more beautiful than our world.

‘Among the shining orders there does not seem to be any individualized life: thus if one of them raises his hands all raise their hands, and if one drinks from a fire-fountain all do; they seem to move and to have their real existence in a being higher than themselves, to which they are a kind of body. Theirs is, I think, a collective life, so unindividualized and so calm that I might have more varied thoughts in five hours than they would have in five years; and yet one feels an extraordinary purity and exaltation about their life. Beauty of form with them has never been broken up by the passions which arise in the developed egotism of human beings. A hive of bees has been described as a single organism with disconnected cells; and some of these tribes of shining beings seem to be little more than one being manifesting itself in many beautiful forms. I speak this with reference to the shining beings only: I think that among the opalescent or *Sidhe* beings, in the heaven-world, there is an even closer spiritual unity, but also a greater individuality.’

*Influence of the 'Sidhe' on Men.*—

Q.—Do you consider any of these *Sidhe* beings inimical to humanity?

A.—‘Certain kinds of the shining beings, whom I call wood beings, have never affected me with any evil influences I could recognize. But the water beings, also of the shining tribes, I always dread, because I felt whenever I came into contact with them a great drowsiness of mind and, I often thought, an actual drawing away of vitality.’

*Water Beings Described.*—

Q.—Can you describe one of these water beings?

A.—‘In the world under the waters—under a lake in the West of Ireland in this case—I saw a blue and orange coloured king seated on a throne; and there seemed to be some fountain of mystical fire rising from under his

throne, and he breathed this fire into himself as though it were his life. As I looked, I saw groups of pale beings, almost grey in colour, coming down one side of the throne by the fire-fountain. They placed their head and lips near the heart of the elemental king, and, then, as they touched him, they shot upwards, plumed and radiant, and passed on the other side, as though they had received a new life from this chief of their world.'

*Wood Beings Described.*—

Q.—Can you describe one of the wood beings?

A.—‘The wood beings I have seen most often are of a shining silvery colour with a tinge of blue or pale violet, and with dark purple-coloured hair.’

*Reproduction and Immortality of the ‘Sidhe’.*—

Q.—Do you consider the races of the *Sidhe* able to reproduce their kind; and are they immortal?

A.—‘The higher kinds seem capable of breathing forth beings out of themselves, but I do not understand how they do so. I have seen some of them who contain elemental beings within themselves, and these they could send out and receive back within themselves again.

‘The immortality ascribed to them by the ancient Irish is only a relative immortality, their space of life being much greater than ours. In time, however, I believe that they grow old and then pass into new bodies just as men do, but whether by birth or by the growth of a new body I cannot say, since I have no certain knowledge about this.’

*Sex among the ‘Sidhe’.*—

Q.—Does sexual differentiation seem to prevail among the *Sidhe* races?

A.—‘I have seen forms both male and female, and forms which did not suggest sex at all.’

*‘Sidhe’ and Human Life.*—

Q.—(1) Is it possible, as the ancient Irish thought, that certain of the higher *Sidhe* beings have entered or could enter our plane of life by submitting to human birth? (2) On the other hand, do you consider it possible for men in trance or at death to enter the *Sidhe* world?

A.—(1) ‘I cannot say.’ (2) ‘Yes; both in trance and after death. I think any one who thought much of the *Sidhe* during his life and who saw them frequently and brooded on them would likely go to their world after death.’

*Social Organization of the ‘Sidhe’.*—

Q.—You refer to chieftain-like or prince-like beings, and to a king among water beings; is there therefore definite social organization among the various *Sidhe* orders and races, and if so, what is its nature?

A.—‘I cannot say about a definite social organization. I have seen beings who seemed to command others, and who were held in reverence. This implies an organization, but whether it is instinctive like that of a hive of bees, or consciously organized like human society, I cannot say.’

*Lower ‘Sidhe’ as Nature Elementals.*—

Q.—You speak of the water-being king as an elemental king; do you suggest thereby a resemblance between lower *Sidhe* orders and what mediaeval mystics called elementals?

A.—‘The lower orders of the *Sidhe* are, I think, the nature elementals of the mediaeval mystics.’

*Nourishment of the Higher ‘Sidhe’.*—

Q.—The water beings as you have described them seem to be nourished and kept alive by something akin to electrical fluids; do the higher orders of the *Sidhe* seem to be similarly nourished?

A.—‘They seemed to me to draw their life out of the Soul of the World.’

*Collective Visions of ‘Sidhe’ Beings.*—

Q.—Have you had visions of the various *Sidhe* beings in company with other persons?

A.—‘I have had such visions on several occasions.’

And this statement has been confirmed to me by three participants in such collective visions, who separately at different times have seen in company with our witness the same vision at the same moment. On another occasion, on the Greenlands at Rosses Point, County Sligo, the same *Sidhe* being was seen by our present witness and a friend with him, also possessing the faculty of seership, at a time when the two percipients were

some little distance apart, and they hurried to each other to describe the being, not knowing that the explanation was mutually unnecessary. I have talked with both percipients so much, and know them so intimately that I am fully able to state that as percipients they fulfil all necessary pathological conditions required by psychologists in order to make their evidence acceptable.

### **Parallel Evidence as to the *Sidhe* Races**

In general, the rare evidence above recorded from the Irish seer could be paralleled by similar evidence from at least two other reliable Irish people, with whom also I have been privileged to discuss the Fairy-Faith. One is a member of the Royal Irish Academy, the other is the wife of a well-known Irish historian; and both of them testify to having likewise had collective visions of *Sidhe* beings in Ireland.

This is what Mr. William B. Yeats wrote to me, while this study was in progress, concerning the Celtic Fairy Kingdom:—‘I am certain that it exists, and will some day be studied as it was studied by Kirk.’<sup>21</sup>

### **Independent Evidence from the *Sidhe* World**

One of the most remarkable discoveries of our Celtic researches has been that the native population of the Rosses Point country, or, as we have called it, the *Sidhe* world, in most essentials, and, what is most important, by independent folk-testimony, substantiate the opinions and statements of the educated Irish mystics to whom we have just referred, as follows:—

*John Conway’s Vision of the ‘Gentry’*.—In Upper Rosses Point, Mrs. J. Conway told me this about the ‘gentry’:—‘John Conway, my husband, who was a pilot by profession, in watching for in-coming ships used to go up on the high hill among the Fairy Hills; and there he often saw the *gentry* going down the hill to the strand. One night in particular he recognized them as

men and women of the *gentry*; and they were as big as any living people. It was late at night about forty years ago.'

*Ghosts and Fairies.*—When first I introduced myself to Owen Conway, in his bachelor quarters, a cosy cottage at Upper Rosses Point, he said that Mr. W. B. Yeats and other men famous in Irish literature had visited him to hear about the fairies, and that though he knew very little about the fairies he nevertheless always likes to talk of them. Then Owen began to tell me about a man's ghost which both he and Bran Reggan had seen at different times on the road to Sligo, then about a woman's ghost which he and other people had often seen near where we were, and then about the exorcizing of a haunted house in Sligo some sixty years ago by Father McGowan, who as a result died soon afterwards, apparently having been killed by the exorcized spirits. Finally, I heard from him the following anecdotes about the fairies:—

*A Stone Wall overthrown by 'Fairy' Agency.*—'Nothing is more certain than that there are fairies. The old folks always thought them the fallen angels. At the back of this house the fairies had their pass. My neighbour started to build a cow-shed, and one wall abutting on the pass was thrown down twice, and nothing but the fairies ever did it. The third time the wall was built it stood.'

*Fairies passing through Stone Walls.*—'Where MacEwen's house stands was a noted fairy place. Men in building the house saw fairies on horses coming across the spot, and the stone walls did not stop them at all.'

*Seeing the 'Gentry'.*—'A cousin of mine, who was a pilot, once went to the watch-house up there on the Point to take his brother's place; and he saw ladies coming towards him as he crossed the Greenlands. At first he thought they were coming from a dance, but there was no dance going then, and, if there had been, no human beings dressed like them and moving as they were could have come from any part of the globe, and in so great a party, at that hour of the night. Then when they passed him and he saw how beautiful they were, he knew them for the *gentry* women.'

'Michael Reddy (our next witness) saw the *gentry* down on the Greenlands in regimentals like an army, and in daylight. He was a young

man at the time, and had been sent out to see if any cattle were astray.'

And this is what Michael Reddy, of Rosses Point, now a sailor on the ship *Tartar*, sailing from Sligo to neighbouring ports on the Irish coast, asserts in confirmation of Owen Conway's statement about him:—'I saw the *gentry* on the strand (at Lower Rosses Point) about forty years ago. It was afternoon. I first saw one of them like an officer pointing at me what seemed a sword; and when I got on the Greenlands I saw a great company of *gentry*, like soldiers, in red, laughing and shouting. Their leader was a big man, and they were ordinary human size. As a result [of this vision] I took to my bed and lay there for weeks. Upon another occasion, late at night, I was with my mother milking cows, and we heard the *gentry* all round us talking, but could not see them.'

*Going to the 'Gentry' through Death, Dreams, or Trance.*—John O'Conway, one of the most reliable citizens of Upper Rosses Point, offers the following testimony concerning the 'gentry':—'In olden times the *gentry* were very numerous about *forts* and here on the Greenlands, but rarely seen. They appeared to be the same as any living men. When people died it was said the *gentry* took them, for they would afterwards appear among the *gentry*.'

'We had a ploughman of good habits who came in one day too late for his morning's work, and he in excuse very seriously said, "May be if you had travelled all night as much as I have you wouldn't talk. I was away with the *gentry*, and save for a lady I couldn't have been back now. I saw a long hall full of many people. Some of them I knew and some I did not know. The lady saved me by telling me to eat no food there, however enticing it might be.'"

'A young man at Drumcliffe was *taken* [in a trance state], and was with the *Daoine Maithe* some time, and then got back. Another man, whom I knew well, was haunted by the *gentry* for a long time, and he often went off with *them*' (apparently in a dream or trance state).

'*Sidhe' Music.*—The story which now follows substantiates the testimony of cultured Irish seers that at Lower Rosses Point the music of the *Sidhe* can be heard:—'Three women were gathering shell-fish, in the month

of March, on the lowest point of the strand (Lower Rosses or Wren Point) when they heard the most beautiful music. They set to work to dance with it, and danced themselves sick. They then thanked the invisible musician and went home.’

### **The Testimony of a College Professor**

Our next witness is the Rev. Father——, a professor in a Catholic college in West Ireland, and most of his statements are based on events which happened among his own acquaintances and relatives, and his deductions are the result of careful investigation:—

*Apparitions from Fairyland.*—‘Some twenty to thirty years ago, on the borders of County Roscommon near County Sligo, according to the firm belief of one of my own relatives, a sister of his was *taken* by the fairies on her wedding-night, and she appeared to her mother afterwards as an apparition. She seemed to want to speak, but her mother, who was in bed at the time, was thoroughly frightened, and turned her face to the wall. The mother is convinced that she saw this apparition of her daughter, and my relative thinks she might have saved her.

‘This same relative who gives it as his opinion that his sister was *taken* by the fairies, at a different time saw the apparition of another relative of mine who also, according to similar belief, had been *taken* by the fairies when only five years old. The child-apparition appeared beside its living sister one day while the sister was going from the yard into the house, and it followed her in. It is said the child was *taken* because she was such a good girl.’

*Nature of the Belief in Fairies.*—‘As children we were always afraid of fairies, and were taught to say “God bless *them*! God bless *them*!” whenever we heard them mentioned.

‘In our family we always made it a point to have clean water in the house at night for the fairies.



‘If anything like dirty water was thrown out of doors after dark it was necessary to say “*Hugga, hugga salach!*” as a warning to the fairies not to get their clothes wet.

‘Untasted food, like milk, used to be left on the table at night for the fairies. If you were eating and food fell from you, it was not right to take it back, for the fairies wanted it. Many families are very serious about this even now. The luckiest thing to do in such cases is to pick up the food and eat just a speck of it and then throw the rest away to the fairies.

‘Ghosts and apparitions are commonly said to live in isolated thorn-bushes, or thorn-trees. Many lonely bushes of this kind have their ghosts. For example, there is Fanny’s Bush, Sally’s Bush, and another I know of in County Sligo near Boyle.’

*Personal Opinions.*—‘The fairies of any one race are the people of the preceding race—the Fomors for the Fir Bolgs, the Fir Bolgs for the Dananns, and the Dananns for us. The old races died. Where did they go? They became spirits—and fairies. Second-sight gave our race power to see the inner world. When Christianity came to Ireland the people had no *definite* heaven. Before, their ideas about the other world were vague. But the older ideas of a spirit world remained side by side with the Christian ones, and being preserved in a subconscious way gave rise to the fairy world.’

## **Evidence from County Roscommon**

Our next place for investigation will be the ancient province of the great fairy-queen Meave, who made herself famous by leading against Cuchulainn the united armies of four of the five provinces of Ireland, and all on account of a bull which she coveted. And there could be no better part of it to visit than Roscommon, which Dr. Douglas Hyde has made popular in Irish folk-lore.

*Dr. Hyde and the Leprechaun.*—One day while I was privileged to be at Ratra, Dr. Hyde invited me to walk with him in the country. After we had

visited an old *fort* which belongs to the ‘good people’, and had noticed some other of their haunts in that part of Queen Meave’s realm, we entered a straw-thatched cottage on the roadside and found the good house-wife and her fine-looking daughter both at home. In response to Dr. Hyde’s inquiries, the mother stated that one day, in her girlhood, near a hedge from which she was gathering wild berries, she saw a leprechaun in a hole under a stone: —‘He wasn’t much larger than a doll, and he was most perfectly formed, with a little mouth and eyes.’ Nothing was told about the little fellow having a money-bag, although the woman said people told her afterwards that she would have been rich if she had only had sense enough to catch him when she had so good a chance.<sup>22</sup>

*The Death Coach.*—The next tale the mother told was about the death coach which used to pass by the very house we were in. Every night until after her daughter was born she used to rise up on her elbow in bed to listen to the death coach passing by. It passed about midnight, and she could hear the rushing, the tramping of the horses, and most beautiful singing, just like fairy music, but she could not understand the words. Once or twice she was brave enough to open the door and look out as the coach passed, but she could never see a thing, though there was the noise and singing. One time a man had to wait on the roadside to let the fairy horses go by, and he could hear their passing very clearly, and couldn’t see one of them.

When we got home, Dr. Hyde told me that the fairies of the region are rarely seen. The people usually say that they hear or feel them only.

*The ‘Good People’ and Mr. Gilleran.*—After the mother had testified, the daughter, who is quite of the younger generation, gave her own opinion. She said that the ‘good people’ live in the *forts* and often take men and women or youths who pass by the *forts* after sunset; that Mr. Gilleran, who died not long ago, once saw certain dead friends and recognized among them those who were believed to have been *taken* and those who died naturally, and that he saw them again when he was on his death-bed.

We have here, as in so many other accounts, a clear connexion between the realm of the dead and Fairyland.

## The Testimony of a Lough Derg Seer

Neil Colton, seventy-three years old, who lives in Tamlach Townland, on the shores of Lough Derg, County Donegal, has a local reputation for having seen the ‘gentle folk’, and so I called upon him. As we sat round his blazing turf fire, and in the midst of his family of three sturdy boys—for he married late in life—this is what he related:—

*A Girl Recovered from Faerie.*—‘One day, just before sunset in midsummer, and I a boy then, my brother and cousin and myself were gathering bilberries (whortleberries) up by the rocks at the back of here, when all at once we heard music. We hurried round the rocks, and there we were within a few hundred feet of six or eight of the *gentle folk*, and they dancing. When they saw us, a little woman dressed all in red came running out from them towards us, and she struck my cousin across the face with what seemed to be a green rush. We ran for home as hard as we could, and when my cousin reached the house she fell dead. Father saddled a horse and went for Father Ryan. When Father Ryan arrived, he put a stole about his neck and began praying over my cousin and reading psalms and striking her with the stole; and in that way brought her back. He said if she had not caught hold of my brother, she would have been *taken* for ever.’

*The ‘Gentle Folk’.*—‘The *gentle folk* are not earthly people; they are a people with a nature of their own. Even in the water there are men and women of the same character. Others have caves in the rocks, and in them rooms and apartments. These races were terribly plentiful a hundred years ago, and they’ll come back again. My father lived two miles from here, where there were plenty of the *gentle folk*. In olden times they used to take young folks and keep them and draw all the life out of their bodies. Nobody could ever tell their nature exactly.’

## Evidence from County Fermanagh

From James Summerville, eighty-eight years old, who lives in the country near Irvinestown, I heard much about the ‘wee people’ and about banshees, and then the following remarkable story concerning the ‘good people’:—

*Travelling Clairvoyance through ‘Fairy’ Agency.*—‘From near Ederney, County Fermanagh, about seventy years ago, a man whom I knew well was taken to America on Hallow Eve Night; and *they* (the *good people*) made him look down a chimney to see his own daughter cooking at a kitchen fire. Then *they* took him to another place in America, where he saw a friend he knew. The next morning he was at his own home here in Ireland.

‘This man wrote a letter to his daughter to know if she was at the place and at the work on Hallow Eve Night, and she wrote back that she was. He was sure that it was the *good people* who had taken him to America and back in one night.’

## **Evidence from County Antrim**

At the request of Major R. G. Berry, M.R.I.A., of Richill Castle, Armagh, Mr. H. Higginson, of Glenavy, County Antrim, collected all the material he could find concerning the fairy-tradition in his part of County Antrim, and sent to me the results, from which I have selected the very interesting, and, in some respects, unique tales which follow:—

*The Fairies and the Weaver.*—‘Ned Judge, of Sophys Bridge, was a weaver. Every night after he went to bed the weaving started of itself, and when he arose in the morning he would find the dressing which had been made ready for weaving so broken and entangled that it took him hours to put it right. Yet with all this drawback he got no poorer, because the fairies left him plenty of household necessities, and whenever he sold a web [of cloth] he always received treble the amount bargained for.’

*Meeting Two Regiments of ‘Them’.*—‘William Megarry, of Ballinderry, as his daughter who is married to James Megarry, J.P., told me, was one night going to Crumlin on horseback for a doctor, when after passing through Glenavy he met just opposite the Vicarage two regiments of *them* (the fairies) coming along the road towards Glenavy. One regiment was dressed in red and one in blue or green uniform. *They* were playing music, but when they opened out to let him pass through the middle of *them* the music ceased until he had passed by.’

## **In Cuchulainn’s Country: A Civil Engineer’s Testimony**

In the heroic days of pagan Ireland, as tradition tells, the ancient earthworks, now called the Navan Rings, just outside Armagh, were the stronghold of Cuchulainn and the Red Branch Knights; and, later, under Patrick, Armagh itself, one of the old mystic centres of Erin, became the ecclesiastical capital of the Gaels. And from this romantic country, one of

its best informed native sons, a graduate civil engineer of Dublin University, offers the following important evidence:—

*The Fairies are the Dead.*—‘When I was a youngster near Armagh, I was kept good by being told that the fairies could take bad boys away. The sane belief about the fairies, however, is different, as I discovered when I grew up. The old people in County Armagh seriously believe that the fairies are the spirits of the dead; and they say that if you have many friends deceased you have many friendly fairies, or if you have many enemies deceased you have many fairies looking out to do you harm.’

*Food-Offerings to Place-Fairies.*—‘It was very usual formerly, and the practice is not yet given up, to place a bed, some other furniture, and plenty of food in a newly-constructed dwelling the night before the time fixed for moving into it; and if the food is not consumed, and the crumbs swept up by the door in the morning, the house cannot safely be occupied. I know of two houses now that have never been occupied, because the fairies did not show their willingness and goodwill by taking food so offered to them.’

## **On the Slopes of Slieve Gullion**

In climbing to the summit of Cuchulainn’s mountain, which overlooks parts of the territory made famous by the ‘Cattle Raid of Cooley’, I met John O’Hare, sixty-eight years old, of Longfield Townland, leading his horse to pasture, and I stopped to talk with him about the ‘good people’.

‘The *good people* in this mountain,’ he said, ‘are the people who have died and been *taken*; the mountain is enchanted.’

*The ‘Fairy’ Overflowing of the Meal-Chest.*—‘An old woman came to the wife of Steven Callaghan and told her not to let Steven cut a certain hedge. “It is where we shelter at night,” the old woman added; and Mrs. Callaghan recognized the old woman as one who had been *taken* in confinement. A few nights later the same old woman appeared to Mrs. Callaghan and asked for charity; and she was offered some meal, which she did not take. Then she asked for lodgings, but did not stop. When

Mrs. Callaghan saw the meal-chest next morning it was overflowing with meal: it was the old woman's gift for the hedge.'

### **The Testimony of two Dromintee Percipients**

After my friend, the Rev. Father L. Donnellan, C.C., of Dromintee, County Armagh, had introduced me to Alice Cunningham, of his parish, and she had told much about the 'gentle folk', she emphatically declared that they do exist—and this in the presence of Father Donnellan—because she has often seen them on Carrickbroad Mountain, near where she lives. And she then reported as follows concerning enchanted Slieve Gullion:—

*The 'Sidhe' Guardian of Slieve Gullion.*—'The top of Slieve Gullion is a very *gentle* place. A fairy has her house there by the lake, but she is invisible. She interferes with nobody. I hear of no *gentler* places about here than Carrickbroad and Slieve Gullion.'

Father Donnellan and I called next upon Thomas McCrink and his wife at Carrifamayan, because Mrs. McCrink claims to have seen some of the 'good people', and this is her testimony:—

*Nature of the 'Good People'.*—'I've heard and felt the *good people* coming on the wind; and I once saw them down in the middle field on my father's place playing football. They are still on earth. Among them are the spirits of our ancestors; and these rejoice whenever good fortune comes our way, for I saw them before my mother won her land [after a long legal contest] in the field rejoicing.

'Some of the *good people* I have thought were fallen angels, though these may be dead people whose time is not up. We are only like shadows in this world: my mother died in England, and she came to me in the spirit. I saw her plainly. I ran to catch her, but my hands ran through her form as if it were mere mist. Then there was a crack, and she was gone.' And, finally, after a moment, our percipient said:—'The fairies once passed down this lane here on a Christmas morning; and I took them to be suffering souls out of Purgatory, going to mass.'

## The Testimony of a Dromintee Seeress

Father Donnellan, the following day, took me to talk with almost the oldest woman in his parish, Mrs. Biddy Grant, eighty-six years old, of Upper Toughal, beside Slieve Gullion. Mrs. Grant is a fine specimen of an Irishwoman, with white hair, clear complexion, and an expression of great natural intelligence, though now somewhat feeble from age. Her mind is yet clear, however; and her testimony is substantiated by this statement from her own daughter, who lives with her:—‘My mother has the power of seeing things. It is a fact with her that spirits exist. She has seen much, even in her old age; and what she is always telling me scares me half to death.’

The following is Mrs. Grant’s direct testimony given at her own home, on September 20, 1909, in answer to our question if she knew anything about the ‘good people’:—

*Seeing the ‘Good People’ as the Dead.*—‘I saw *them* once as plain as can be—big, little, old, and young. I was in bed at the time, and a boy whom I had reared since he was born was lying ill beside me. Two of *them* came and looked at him; then came in three of *them*. One of *them* seemed to have something like a book, and he put his hand to the boy’s mouth; then he went away, while others appeared, opening the back window to make an avenue through the house; and through this avenue came great crowds. At this I shook the boy, and said to him, “Do you see anything?” “No,” he said; but as I made him look a second time he said, “I do.” After that he got well.

‘These *good people* were the spirits of our dead friends, but I could not recognize them. I have often seen them that way while in my bed. Many women are among them. I once touched a boy of theirs, and he was just like feathers in my hand; there was no substance in him, and I knew he wasn’t a living being. I don’t know where they live; I’ve heard they live in the *Carrige* (rocks). Many a time I’ve heard of their *taking* people or leading them astray. They can’t live far away when they come to me in such a rush.



They are as big as we are. I think these fairy people are all through this country and in the mountains.'

*An Apparition of a 'Sidhe' Woman?*—'At a wake I went out of doors at midnight and saw a woman running up and down the field with a strange light in her hand. I called out my daughter, but she saw nothing, though all the time the woman dressed in white was in the field, shaking the light and running back and forth as fast as you could wink. I thought the woman might be the spirit of Nancy Frink, but I was not sure.' (Cf. pp. 60 ff., 83, 155, 215.)

### **Evidence from Lough Gur, County Limerick**

One of the most interesting parts of Ireland for the archaeologist and for the folk-lorist alike is the territory immediately surrounding Lough Gur, County Limerick. Shut in for the most part from the outer world by a circle of low-lying hills on whose summits fairy goddesses yet dwell invisibly, this region, famous for its numerous and well-preserved cromlechs, dolmens, menhirs, and tumuli, and for the rare folk-traditions current among its peasantry, has long been popularly regarded as a sort of Otherworld preserve haunted by fairy beings, who dwell both in its waters and on its land.

There seems to be no reasonable doubt that in pre-Christian times the Lough Gur country was a very sacred spot, a mystic centre for pilgrimages and for the celebration of Celtic religious rites, including those of initiation. The Lough is still enchanted, but once in seven years the spell passes off it, and it then appears like dry land to any one that is fortunate enough to behold it. At such a time of disenchantment a Tree is seen growing up through the lake-bottom—a Tree like the strange World-Tree of Scandinavian myth. The Tree is covered with a Green Cloth, and under it sits the lake's guardian, a woman knitting.<sup>23</sup> The peasantry about Lough Gur still believe that beneath its waters there is one of the chief entrances in Ireland to *Tír-na-nog*, the 'Land of Youth', the Fairy Realm. And when a

child is stolen by the Munster fairies, ‘Lough Gur is conjectured to be the place of its unearthly transmutation from the human to the fairy state.’<sup>23</sup>

To my friend, Count John de Salis, of Balliol College, I am indebted for the following legendary material, collected by him on the fairy-haunted Lough Gur estate, his ancestral home, and annotated by the Rev. J. F. Lynch, one of the best-informed antiquarians living in that part of South Ireland:—

*The Fairy Goddesses, Aine and Fennel (or Finnen).*—‘There are two hills near Lough Gur upon whose summits sacrifices and sacred rites used to be celebrated according to living tradition. One, about three miles south-west of the lake, is called Knock Aine, Aine or Ane being the name of an ancient Irish goddess, derived from *an*, “bright.” The other, the highest hill on the lake-shores, is called Knock Fennel or Hill of the Goddess Fennel, from *Finnen* or *Finnine* or *Fininne*, a form of *fin*, “white.” The peasantry of the region call Aine one of the Good People;<sup>24</sup> and they say that Fennel (apparently her sister goddess or a variant of herself) lived on the top of Knock Fennel’ (termed Finnen in a State Paper dated 1200).

*The Fairy Boat-Race.*—‘Different old peasants have told me that on clear calm moonlight nights in summer, fairy boats appear racing across Lough Gur. The boats come from the eastern side of the lake, and when they have arrived at Garrod Island, where the Desmond Castle lies in ruins, they vanish behind Knock Adoon. There are four of these phantom boats, and in each there are two men rowing and a woman steering. No sound is heard, though the seer can see the weird silvery splash of the oars and the churning of the water at the bows of the boats as they shoot along. It is evident that they are racing, because one boat gets ahead of the others, and all the rowers can be seen straining at the oars. Boats and occupants seem to be transparent, and you cannot see exactly what their nature is. One old peasant told me that it is the shining brightness of the clothes on the phantom rowers and on the women who steer which makes them visible.

‘Another man, who is about forty years of age, and as far as I know of good habits, assures me that he also has seen this fairy boat-race, and that it can still be seen at the proper season.’

*The Bean-Tighe.*<sup>25</sup>—‘The *Bean-tighe*, the fairy housekeeper of the enchanted submerged castle of the Earl of Desmond, is supposed to appear sitting on an ancient earthen monument shaped like a great chair and hence called *Suidheachan*, the “Housekeeper’s Little Seat,” on Knock Adoon (Hill of the Fort), which juts out into the Lough. The *Bean-tighe*, as I have heard an old peasant tell the tale, was once asleep on her Seat, when the *Buachaille*<sup>26</sup> or “Little Herd Boy” stole her golden comb. When the *Bean-tighe* awoke and saw what had happened, she cast a curse upon the cattle of the *Buachaille*, and soon all of them were dead, and then the “Little Herd Boy” himself died, but before his death he ordered the golden comb to be cast into the Lough.’<sup>27</sup>

*Lough Gur Fairies in General.*—‘The peasantry in the Lough Gur region commonly speak of the *Good People* or of the *Kind People* or of the *Little People*, their names for the fairies. The leprechaun indicates the place where hidden treasure is to be found. If the person to whom he reveals such a secret makes it known to a second person, the first person dies, or else no money is found: in some cases the money is changed into ivy leaves or into furze blossoms.

‘I am convinced that some of the older peasants still believe in fairies. I used to go out on the lake occasionally on moonlight nights, and an old woman supposed to be a “wise woman” (a seeress), hearing about my doing this, told me that under no circumstances should I continue the practice, for fear of “Them People” (the fairies). One evening in particular I was warned by her not to venture on the lake. She solemnly asserted that the “Powers of Darkness” were then abroad, and that it would be misfortune for me to be in their path.’<sup>28</sup>

‘Under ordinary circumstances, as a very close observer of the Lough Gur peasantry informs me, the old people will pray to the Saints, but if by any chance such prayers remain unanswered they then invoke other powers, the fairies, the goddesses Aine and Fennel, or other pagan deities, whom they seem to remember in a vague subconscious manner through tradition.’

## Testimony from a County Kerry Seer

To another of my fellow students in Oxford, a native Irishman of County Kerry, I am indebted for the following evidence:—

*A Collective Vision of Spiritual Beings.*—‘Some few weeks before Christmas, 1910, at midnight on a very dark night, I and another young man (who like myself was then about twenty-three years of age) were on horseback on our way home from Limerick. When near Listowel, we noticed a light about half a mile ahead. At first it seemed to be no more than a light in some house; but as we came nearer to it and it was passing out of our direct line of vision we saw that it was moving up and down, to and fro, diminishing to a spark, then expanding into a yellow luminous flame. Before we came to Listowel we noticed two lights, about one hundred yards to our right, resembling the light seen first. Suddenly each of these lights expanded into the same sort of yellow luminous flame, about six feet high by four feet broad. In the midst of each flame we saw a radiant being having human form. Presently the lights moved toward one another and made contact, whereupon the two beings in them were seen to be walking side by side. The beings’ bodies were formed of a pure dazzling radiance, white like the radiance of the sun, and much brighter than the yellow light or aura surrounding them. So dazzling was the radiance, like a halo, round their heads that we could not distinguish the countenances of the beings; we could only distinguish the general shape of their bodies; though their heads were very clearly outlined because this halo-like radiance, which was the brightest light about them, seemed to radiate from or rest upon the head of each being. As we travelled on, a house intervened between us and the lights, and we saw no more of them. It was the first time we had ever seen such phenomena, and in our hurry to get home we were not wise enough to stop and make further examination. But ever since that night I have frequently seen, both in Ireland and in England, similar lights with spiritual beings in them.’ (Cf. pp. 60 ff., 77, 133, 155, 215, 483.)

*Reality of the Spiritual World.*—‘Like my companion, who saw all that I saw of the first three lights, I formerly had always been a sceptic as to the

existence of spirits; now I know that there is a spiritual world. My brother, a physician, had been equally sceptical until he saw, near our home at Listowel, similar lights containing spiritual beings and was obliged to admit the genuineness of the phenomena.

‘In whatever country we may be, I believe that we are for ever immersed in the spiritual world; but most of us cannot perceive it on account of the unrefined nature of our physical bodies. Through meditation and psychical training one can come to see the spiritual world and its beings. We pass into the spirit realm at death and come back into the human world at birth; and we continue to reincarnate until we have overcome all earthly desires and mortal appetites. Then the higher life is open to our consciousness and we cease to be human; we become divine beings.’ (Recorded in Oxford, England, August 12, 1911.)

### III. IN SCOTLAND

Introduction by Alexander Carmichael, Hon. LL.D. of the University of Edinburgh; author of *Carmina Gadelica*.

The belief in fairies was once common throughout Scotland—Highland and Lowland. It is now much less prevalent even in the Highlands and Islands, where such beliefs linger longer than they do in the Lowlands. But it still lives among the old people, and is privately entertained here and there even among younger people; and some who hold the belief declare that they themselves have seen fairies.

Various theories have been advanced as to the origin of fairies and as to the belief in them. The most concrete form in which the belief has been urged has been by the Rev. Robert Kirk, minister of Aberfoyle, in Perthshire.<sup>29</sup> Another theory of the origin of fairies I took down in the island of Miunghlaidh (Minglay); and, though I have given it in *Carmina Gadelica*, it is sufficiently interesting to be quoted here. During October 1871, Roderick Macneill, known as ‘Ruaraidh mac Dhomhuil,’ then ninety-

two years of age, told it in Gaelic to the late J. F. Campbell of Islay and the writer, when they were storm-stayed in the precipitous island of Miunghlaidh, Barra:—

‘The Proud Angel fomented a rebellion among the angels of heaven, where he had been a leading light. He declared that he would go and found a kingdom for himself. When going out at the door of heaven the Proud Angel brought prickly lightning and biting lightning out of the doorstep with his heels. Many angels followed him—so many that at last the Son called out, “Father! Father! the city is being emptied!” whereupon the Father ordered that the gates of heaven and the gates of hell should be closed. This was instantly done. And those who were in were in, and those who were out were out; while the hosts who had left heaven and had not reached hell flew into the holes of the earth, like the stormy petrels. These are the Fairy Folk—ever since doomed to live under the ground, and only allowed to emerge where and when the King permits. They are never allowed abroad on Thursday, that being Columba’s Day; nor on Friday, that being the Son’s Day; nor on Saturday, that being Mary’s Day; nor on Sunday, that being the Lord’s Day.

God be between me and every fairy,  
Every ill wish and every druidry;  
To-day is Thursday on sea and land,  
I trust in the King that they do not hear me.

On certain nights when their *bruthain* (bowers) are open and their lamps are lit, and the song and the dance are moving merrily, the fairies may be heard singing lightheartedly:—

Not of the seed of Adam are we,  
Nor is Abraham our father;  
But of the seed of the Proud Angel,  
Driven forth from Heaven.’

The fairies entered largely into the lives and into the folk-lore of the Highland people, and the following examples of things named after the fairies indicate the manner in which the fairies dominated the minds of the people of Gaeldom:—*teine sith*, ‘fairy fire’ (*ignis fatuus*); *breaca sith*, ‘fairy marks,’ livid spots appearing on the faces of the dead or dying; *marcachd shith*, ‘fairy riding,’ paralysis of the spine in animals, alleged to be brought on by the fairy mouse riding across the backs of animals while they are lying down; *piob shith*, ‘fairy pipe’ or ‘elfin pipe’, generally found in ancient underground houses; *miaran na mna sithe*, ‘the thimble of the fairy woman,’ the fox-glove; *lion na mna sithe*, ‘lint of the fairy woman,’ fairy flax, said to be beneficial in certain illnesses; and *curachan na mna sithe*, ‘coracle of the fairy woman,’ the shell of the blue valilla. In place-names *sith*, ‘fairy,’ is common. Glenshee, in Perthshire, is said to have been full of fairies, but the screech of the steam-whistle frightened them underground. There is scarcely a district of the Highlands without its fairy knoll, generally the greenest hillock in the place. ‘The black chanter of Clan Chattan’ is said to have been given to a famous Macpherson piper by a fairy woman who loved him; and the Mackays have a flag said to have been given to a Mackay by a fairy sweetheart. The well-known fairy flag of Dunvegan is said to have been given to a Macleod of Macleod by a fairy woman; and the Macrimmons of Bororaig, pipers to the Macleods of Macleod, had a chanter called ‘*Sionnsair airgid na mna sithe*’, ‘the silver chanter of the fairy woman.’ A family in North Uist is known as *Dubh-sith*, ‘Black fairy,’ from a tradition that the family had been familiar with the fairies in their secret flights and nightly migrations.

Donald Macalastair, seventy-nine years of age, crofter, Druim-a-ghinnir, Arran, told me, in the year 1895, the following story in Gaelic:—‘The fairies were dwelling in the knoll, and they had a near neighbour who used to visit them in their home. The man used to observe the ways of the fairies and to do as they did. The fairies took a journey upon them to go to Ireland, and the man took upon him to go with them. Every single fairy of them caught a ragwort and went astride it, and they were pell-mell, every knee of them across the Irish Ocean in an instant, and across the Irish Ocean was

the man after them, astride a ragwort like one of themselves. A little wee tiny fairy shouted and asked were they all ready, and all the others replied that they were, and the little fairy called out:—

My king at my head,  
Going across in my haste,  
On the crests of the waves,  
To Ireland.

“Follow me,” said the king of the fairies, and away they went across the Irish Ocean, every mother’s son of them astride his ragwort. Macuga (Cook) did not know on earth how he would return to his native land, but he leapt upon the ragwort as he saw the fairies do, and he called as he heard them call, and in an instant he was back in Arran. But he had got enough of the fairies on this trip itself, and he never went with them again.’

The fairies were wont to take away infants and their mothers, and many precautions were taken to safeguard them till purification and baptism took place, when the fairy power became ineffective. Placing iron about the bed, burning leather in the room, giving mother and child the milk of a cow which had eaten of the *mothan*, pearl-wort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), a plant of virtue, and similar means were taken to ensure their safety. If the watching-women neglected these precautions, the mother or child or both were spirited away to the fairy bower. Many stories are current on this subject.

Sometimes the fairies helped human beings with their work, coming in at night to finish the spinning or the house-work, or to thresh the farmer’s corn or fan his grain. On such occasions they must not be molested nor interfered with, even in gratitude. If presented with a garment they will go away and work no more. This method of getting rid of them is often resorted to, as it is not easy always to find work for them to do.

*Bean chaol a chot uaine ‘s na gruaige buidhe*, ‘the slender woman of the green kirtle and of the yellow hair,’ is wise of head and deft of hand. She can convert the white water of the rill into rich red wine and the threads of the spiders into a tartan plaid. From the stalk of the fairy reed she can



bring the music of the lull of the peace and of the repose, however active the brain and lithe the limb; and she can rouse to mirth and merriment, and to the dance, men and women, however dolorous their condition. From the bower could be heard the pipe and the song and the voice of laughter as the fairies ‘sett’ and reeled in the mazes of the dance. Sometimes a man hearing the merry music and seeing the wonderful light within would be tempted to go in and join them, but woe to him if he omitted to leave a piece of iron at the door of the bower on entering, for the cunning fairies would close the door and the man would find no egress. There he would dance for years—but to him the years were as one day—while his wife and family mourned him as dead.

The flint arrow-heads so much prized by antiquarians are called in the Highlands *Saighead sith*, fairy arrows. They are said to have been thrown by the fairies at the sons and daughters of men. The writer possesses one which was thrown at his own maid-servant one night when she went to the peatstack for peats. She was aware of something whizzing through the silent air, passing through her hair, grazing her ear and falling at her feet. Stooping in the bright moonlight the girl picked up a fairy arrow!

‘But faith is dead—such things do not happen now,’ said a courteous informant. If not quite dead it is almost dead, hastened by the shifting of population, the establishment of means of communication, the influx of tourists, and the scorn of the more materialistic of the incomers and of the people themselves.

Edinburgh,

October 1910.

### **Aberfoyle, the Country of Robert Kirk**

My first hunt for fairies in Scotland began at Aberfoyle, where the Highlands and the Lowlands meet, and in the very place where Robert Kirk, the minister of Aberfoyle, was *taken* by them, in the year 1692. The

minister spent a large part of his time studying the ways of the 'good people', and he must have been able to see them, for he was a seventh son. Mrs. J. MacGregor, who keeps the key to the old churchyard where there is a tomb to Kirk, though many say there is nothing in it but a coffin filled with stones, told me that Kirk was taken into the Fairy Knoll, which she pointed to just across a little valley in front of us, and is there yet, for the hill is full of caverns, and in them the 'good people' have their homes. And she added that Kirk appeared to a relative of his after he was *taken*, and said that he was in the power of the 'good people', and couldn't get away. 'But,' says he, 'I can be set free if you will have my cousin do what I tell him when I appear again at the christening of my child in the parsonage.' According to Mr. Andrew Lang, who reports the same tradition in more detail in his admirable Introduction to *The Secret Commonwealth*, the cousin was Grahame of Duchray, and the thing he was to do was to throw a dagger over Kirk's head. Grahame was at hand at the christening of the posthumous child, but was so astonished to see Kirk appear as Kirk said he would, that he did not throw the dagger, and so Kirk became a perpetual prisoner of the 'good people'.

After having visited Kirk's tomb, I called on the Rev. William M. Taylor, the present successor of Kirk, and, as we sat together in the very room where Kirk must have written his *Secret Commonwealth*, he told me that tradition reports Kirk as having been *taken* by the fairies while he was walking on their hill, which is but a short way from the parsonage. 'At the time of his disappearance, people said he was *taken* because the fairies were displeased with him for prying into their secrets. At all events, it seems likely that Kirk was taken ill very suddenly with something like apoplexy while on the Fairy Knoll, and died there. I have searched the presbytery books, and find no record of how Kirk's death really took place; but of course there is not the least doubt of his body being in the grave.' So thus, according to Mr. Taylor, we are to conclude that if the fairies carried off anything, it must have been the spirit or soul of Kirk. I talked with others round Aberfoyle about Kirk, and some would have it that his body and soul were both *taken*, and that what was buried was no corpse at all.

Mrs. Margaret MacGregor, one of the few Gaelic speakers of the old school left in Aberfoyle, holds another opinion, for she said to me, ‘Nothing could be surer than that the *good people* took Kirk’s spirit only.’

In the Aberfoyle country, the Fairy-Faith, save for the stories about Kirk, which will probably persist for a long time yet, is rapidly passing. In fact it is almost forgotten now. Up to thirty years ago, as Mr. Taylor explained, before the railway reached Aberfoyle, belief in fairies was much more common. Nowadays, he says, there is no real fairy-lore among the peasants; fifty to sixty years ago there was. And in his opinion, ‘the fairy people of three hundred years ago in Scotland were a distinct race by themselves. They had never been human beings. The belief in them was a survival of paganism, and not at all an outgrowth of Christian belief in angelic hosts.’

### **A Scotch Minister’s Testimony**

A Protestant minister of Scotland will be our next witness. He is a native of Ross-shire, though he draws many of his stories from the Western Hebrides, where his calling has placed him. Because he speaks from personal knowledge of the living Fairy-Faith as it was in his boyhood and is now, and chiefly because he has had the rare privilege of conscious contact with the fairy world, his testimony is of the highest value.

*Reality of Fairies.*—‘When I was a boy I was a firm believer in fairies; and now as a Christian minister I believe in the possibility and also the reality of these spiritual orders, but I wish only to know those orders which belong to the realm of grace. It is very certain that they exist. I have been in a state of ecstasy, and have seen spiritual beings which form these orders.’<sup>30</sup>

‘I believe in the actuality of evil spirits; but people in the Highlands having put aside paganism, evil spirits are not seen now.’

This explanation was offered of how fairies may exist and yet be invisible:—‘Our Saviour became invisible though in the body; and, as the

Scriptures suggest, I suppose we are obliged to concede a similar power of invisibility to spirits as well, good and evil ones alike.'

*Precautions against Fairies.*—'I remember how an old woman pulled me out of a fairy ring to save me from being *taken*.

'If a mother takes some bindweed and places it burnt at the ends over her babe's cradle, the fairies have no power over the child. The bindweed is a common roadside convolvulus.

'As a boy, I saw two old women passing a babe over red-hot coals, and then drop some of the cinders in a cup of water and give the water to the babe to drink, in order to cure it of a fairy stroke.'

*Fairy Fights on Halloween.*—'It is a common belief now that on Halloween the fairies, or the fairy hosts, have fights. Lichens on rocks after there has been a frost get yellowish-red, and then when they thaw and the moisture spreads out from them the rocks are a bright red; and this bright red is said to be the blood of the fairies after one of their battles.'

*Fairies and the Hump-back.*—The following story by the present witness is curious, for it is the same story of a hump-back which is so widespread. The fact that in Scotland the hump is removed or added by fairies as it is in Ireland, in Cornwall by pixies, and in Brittany by *corrigans*, goes far to prove the essential identity of these three orders of beings. The story comes from one of the remote Western Hebrides, Benbecula:—'A man who was a hump-back once met the fairies dancing, and danced with their queen; and he sang with them, "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday," so well that they took off his hump, and he returned home a straight-bodied man. Then a tailor went past the same place, and was also admitted by the fairies to their dance. He caught the fairy queen by the waist, and she resented his familiarity. And in singing he added "Thursday" to their song and spoilt it. To pay the tailor for his rudeness and ill manners, the dancers took up the hump they had just removed from the first man and clapped it on his back, and the conceited fellow went home a hump-back.'

*Libations to Fairies.*—'An elder in my church knew a woman who was accustomed, in milking her cows, to offer libations to the fairies.<sup>31</sup> The woman was later converted to Christ and gave up the practice, and as a

result one of her cows was *taken* by the fairies. Then she revived the practice.

‘The fairy queen who watches over cows is called *Gruagach* in the Islands, and she is often seen. In pouring libations to her and her fairies various kinds of stones, usually with hollows in them, are used.’<sup>32</sup>

‘In Lewis libations are poured to the goddess [or god] of the sea, called *Shoney*,<sup>33</sup> in order to bring in seaweed. Until modern times in Iona similar libations were poured to a god corresponding to Neptune.’

### **In the Highlands**

I had the pleasure as well as the great privilege of setting out from Inverness on a bright crisp September morning in company with Dr. Alexander Carmichael, the well-known folk-lorist of Scotland, to study the Fairy-Faith as it exists now in the Highlands round Tomatin, a small country village about twenty miles distant. We departed by an early train; and soon reaching the Tomatin country began our search—Dr. Carmichael for evidence regarding rare and curious Scotch beliefs connected with folk-magic, such as blood-stopping at a distance and removing moles in the eye at a distance, and I for Highland ghosts and fairies.

Our first experience was with an old man whom we met on the road between the railway station and the post office, who could speak only Gaelic. Dr. Carmichael talked with him awhile, and then asked him about fairies, and he said there were some living in a cave some way off, but as the distance was rather too far we decided not to call on them. Then we went on to see the postmaster, Mr. John MacDougall, and he told us that in his boyhood the country-folk round Tomatin believed thoroughly in fairies. He said they thought of them as a race of spirits capable of making themselves visible to mortals, as living in underground places, as *taking* fine healthy babes and leaving changelings in their place. These changelings would waste away and die in a short time after being left. So

firmly did the old people believe in fairies then that they would ridicule a person for not believing. And now quite the reverse state has come about.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Testimony of John Dunbar of Invereen**

We talked with other Highlanders in the country round Tomatin, and heard only echoes, mostly fragmentary, of what their forefathers used to believe about fairies. But at Invereen we discovered John Dunbar, a Highlander, who really knows the Fairy-Faith and is not ashamed to explain it. Speaking partly from experience and partly from what he has heard his parents relate concerning the ‘good people’, he said:—

*The Sheep and the Fairy-Hunting.*—‘I believe people saw fairies, but I think one reason no one sees them now is because every place in this parish where they used to appear has been put into sheep, and deer, and grouse, and shooting. According to tradition, Coig na Fearn is the place where the last fairy was seen in this country. Before the big sheep came, the fairies are supposed to have had a premonition that their domains were to be violated by them. A story is told of a fight between the sheep and fairies, or else of the fairies hunting the sheep:—James MacQueen, who could traffic with the fairies, whom he regarded as ghosts or spirits, one night on his old place, which now is in sheep, was lying down all alone and heard a small and big barking of dogs, and a small and big bleating of sheep, though no sheep were there then. It was the fairy-hunting he heard. “I put an axe under my head and I had no fear therefore,” he always repeated when telling the story. I believe the man saw and heard something. And MacQueen used to aid the fairies, and on that account, as he was in the habit of saying, he always found more meal in his chest than he thought he had.’

*Fairies.*—‘My grandmother believed firmly in fairies, and I have heard her tell a good many stories about them. They were a small people dressed in green, and had dwellings underground in dry spots. Fairies were often heard in the hills over there (pointing), and I believe something was there. They were awful for music, and used to be heard very often playing the

bagpipes. A woman wouldn't go out in the dark after giving birth to a child before the child was christened, so as not to give the fairies power over her or the child. And I have heard people say that if fairies were refused milk and meat they would *take* a horse or a cow; and that if well treated they would repay all gifts.'

*Time in Fairyland.*—'People would be twenty years in Fairyland and it wouldn't seem more than a night. A bridegroom who was *taken* on his wedding-day was in Fairyland for many generations, and, coming back, thought it was next morning. He asked where all the wedding-guests were, and found only one old woman who remembered the wedding.'

*Highland Legend of the Dead.*—As I have found to be the case in all Celtic countries equally, fairy stories nearly always, in accordance with the law of psychology known as 'the association of ideas', give place to or are blended with legends of the dead. This is an important factor for the Psychological Theory. And what follows proves the same ideas to be present to the mind of Mr. Dunbar:—'Some people after death are seen in their old haunts; no mistake about it. A bailiff had false corn and meal measures, and so after he died he came back to his daughter and told her he could have no peace until the measures were burned. She complied with her father's wish, and his spirit was never seen again. I have known also of phantom funerals of people who died soon afterwards being seen on the road at night.'

## **To the Western Hebrides**

From Inverness I began my journey to the Western Hebrides. While I waited for the steamer to take me from Kyle to the Isle of Skye, an old man with whom I talked on the docks said this about Neill Mackintosh, of Black Island:—'You can't argue with the old man that he hasn't seen fairies. He can tell you all about them.'

## Evidence from the Isle of Skye

Miss Frances Tolmie, who was born at Uignish, Isle of Skye, and has lived many years in the isle in close touch with some of its oldest folk, contributes, from Edinburgh, the evidence which follows. The first two tales were told in the parish of Minginish a number of years ago by Mary Macdonald, a goat-herd, and have their setting in the region of the Koolian<sup>35</sup> range of mountains on the west side of Skye.

*The Fatal Peat Ember.*—‘An aged nurse who had fallen fast asleep as she sat by the fire, was holding on her knees a newly-born babe. The mother, who lay in bed gazing dreamily, was astonished to see three strange little women enter the dwelling. They approached the unconscious child, and she who seemed to be their leader was on the point of lifting it off the nurse’s lap, when the third exclaimed:—“Oh! let us leave this one with her as we have already taken so many!” “So be it,” replied the senior of the party in a tone of displeasure, “but when that peat now burning on the hearth shall be consumed, her life will surely come to an end.” Then the three little figures passed out. The good wife, recognizing them to be fairies, sprang from her bed and poured over the fire all the water she could find, and extinguished the half-burnt ember. This she wrapped carefully in a piece of cloth and deposited at the very bottom of a large chest, which afterwards she always kept locked.

‘Years passed, and the babe grew into a beautiful young woman. In the course of time she was betrothed; and, according to custom, not appearing in public at church on the Sunday preceding the day appointed for her marriage, remained at home alone. To amuse herself, she began to search the contents of all the keeping-places in the house, and came at last to the chest containing the peat ember. In her haste, the good mother had that day forgotten the key of the chest, which was now in the lock. At the bottom of the chest the girl found a curious packet containing nothing but a morsel of peat, and this apparently useless thing she tossed away into the fire. When the peat was well kindled the young girl began to feel very ill, and when her



mother returned was dying. The open chest and the blazing peat explained the cause of the calamity. The fairy's prediction was fulfilled.'

*Results of Refusing Fairy Hospitality.*—'Two women were walking toward the Point when one of them, hearing churning going on under a hillock, expressed aloud a wish for some butter-milk. No sooner had she spoken than a very small figure of a woman came out with a bowlful and offered it to her, but the thirsty woman, ignorant of fairy customs and the penalty attending their infringement, declined the kind offer of refreshment, and immediately found herself a prisoner in the hillock. She was led to an apartment containing a chest full of meal and a great bag of wool, and was told by the fairy that when she had eaten all the meal and spun all the wool she would be free to return to her home. The prisoner at once set herself to eating and spinning assiduously, but without apparent result, and despairing of completing the task consulted an old man of very sad countenance who had long been a captive in the hillock. He willingly gave her his advice, which was to wet her left eye with saliva each morning before she settled down to her task. She followed this advice, and gradually the wool and the meal were exhausted. Then the fairy granted her freedom, but in doing so cursed the old man, and said that she had it in her power to keep him in the hillock for ever.'

*The Fairies' 'Waulking' (Fulling).*—'At Ebost, in Bracadale, an old woman was living in a little hut, with no companion save a wise cat. As we talked, she expressed her wonder that no fairies are ever seen or heard nowadays. She could remember hearing her father tell how he, when a herd-boy, had heard the fairies singing a "waulking" song in Dun-Osdale, an ancient and ruined round tower in the parish of Dùirinish, and not far from Heléval *mhor* (great) and Heléval *bheag* (less)—two hills occasionally alluded to as "Macleod's Tables". The youth was lying on the grass-grown summit of the ruin, and heard them distinctly. As if with exultation, one voice took the verse and then the whole company joined in the following chorus: "*Ho! fir-e! fair-e, foirm! Ho! Fair-eag-an an clò! (Ho! well done! Grand! Ho! bravo the web [of homespun]!)*"'

*Crodh Chailean.*—‘This tale was related by Mr. Neil Macleod, the bard of Skye:—“Colin was a gentleman of Clan Campbell in Perthshire, who was married to a beautiful maiden whom the fairies carried off on her marriage-day, and on whom they cast a spell which rendered her invisible for a day and a year. She came regularly every day to milk the cows of her sorrowing husband, and sang sweetly to them while she milked, but he never once had the pleasure of beholding her, though he could hear perfectly what she sang. At the expiry of the year she was, to his great joy, restored to him.”’<sup>36</sup>

*Fairy Legend of the Macleod Family.*—‘There is a legend told of the Macleod family:—Soon after the heir of the Macleods was born, a beautiful woman in wonderful raiment, who was a fairy woman or banshee (there were joyous as well as mourning banshees) appeared at the castle, and went directly to the babe’s cradle. She took up the babe and chanted over it a series of verses, and each verse had its own melody. The verses foretold the future manhood of the young child, and acted as a protective charm over its life. Then she put the babe back into its cradle, and, going out, disappeared across the moorlands.

‘For many generations it was a custom in the Macleod family that whoever was the nurse of the heir must sing those verses as the fairy woman had sung them. After a time the song was forgotten, but at a later period it was partially recovered, and to-day it is one of the proud folk-lore heritages of the Macleod family.’<sup>37</sup>

*Origin and Nature of the Fairy-Faith.*—Finally, with respect to the origin and nature of the Scotch Fairy-Faith, Miss Tolmie states:—‘As a child I was not permitted to hear about fairies. At twenty I was seeking and trying to understand the beliefs of my fathers in the light of modern ideas. I was very determined not to lose the past.

‘The fairy-lore originated in a cultured class in very ancient times. The peasants inherited it; they did not invent it. With the loss of Gaelic in our times came the loss of folk-ideals. The classical and English influences combined had a killing effect; so that the instinctive religious feeling which used to be among our people when they kept alive the fairy-traditions is

dead. We have intellectually-constructed creeds and doctrines which take its place.

‘We always thought of fairies as mysterious little beings living in hills. They were capricious and irritable, but not wicked. They could do a good turn as well as a bad one. They were not aerial, but had bodies which they could make invisible; and they could make human bodies invisible in the same way. Besides their hollow knolls and mounds there seemed to be a subterranean world in which they also lived, where things are like what they are in this world.’

### **The Isle of Barra,<sup>38</sup> Western Hebrides**

We pass from Cuchulainn’s beautiful island to what is now the most Celtic part of Scotland—the Western Hebrides, where the ancient life is lived yet, and where the people have more than a faith in spirits and fairies. And no one of the Western Hebrides, perhaps excepting the tiny island of Erisgey, has changed less during the last five hundred years than Barra.

Our Barra guide and interpreter, Michael Buchanan, a native and a life-long resident of Barra, is seventy years old, yet as strong and active as a city man at fifty. He knows intimately every old man on the island, and as he was able to draw them out on the subject of the ‘good people’ as no stranger could do, I was quite willing, as well as obliged on account of the Scotch Gaelic, to let him act on my behalf in all my collecting on Barra. Mr. Buchanan is the author of a little book called *The MacNeils of Barra Genealogy*, published in the year 1902. He was the official interpreter before the Commission of Inquiry which was appointed by the British Parliament in 1883 to search into the oppression of landlordism in the Highlands and Islands, and he acted in the same capacity before the Crofters’ Commission and the Deer-Forest Commission. We therefore feel perfectly safe in allowing him to present, before our jury trying the Fairy-Faith, the evidence of the Gaelic-speaking witnesses from Barra.

## John MacNeil's Testimony

We met the first of the Barra witnesses on the top of a rocky hill, where the road from Castlebay passes. He was carrying on his back a sack of sand heavy enough for a college athlete, and he an old man between seventy and eighty years of age. Michael Buchanan has known John MacNeil all his life, for they were boys together on the island; and there is not much difference between them in age, our interpreter being the younger. Then the three of us sat down on a grassy knoll, all the world like a fairy knoll, though it was not; and when pipes were lit and the weather had been discussed, there was introduced the subject of the 'good people'—all in Gaelic, for our witness now about to testify knows no English—and what John MacNeil said is thus interpreted by Michael Buchanan:—

*A Fairy's Visit.*—'Yes, I have' (in answer to a question if he had heard of people being *taken* by the 'good people' or fairies). 'A fairy woman visited the house of a young wife here in Barra, and the young wife had her baby on her breast at the time. The first words uttered by the fairy woman were, "Heavy is your child;" and the wife answered, "Light is everybody who lives the longest." "Were it not that you have answered my question," said the fairy woman, "and understood my meaning, you should have been less your child." And then the fairy woman departed.'

*Fairy-Singing.*—'My mother, and two other women well known here in Barra, went to a hill one day to look after their sheep, and, a thick fog coming on, they had to rest awhile. They then sat down upon a knoll and began to sing a *walking* (cloth-working) song, as follows:—"It is early to-day that I have risen;" and, as they sang, a fairy woman in the rocks responded to their song with one of her own.'

*Nature of Fairies.*—Then the question was asked if fairies were men or spirits, and this is the reply:—"I never saw any myself, and so cannot tell, but they must be spirits from all that the old people tell about them, or else how could they appear and disappear so suddenly? The old people said they didn't know if fairies were flesh and blood, or spirits. They saw them as men of more diminutive stature than our race. I heard my father say that

fairies used to come and speak to natural people, and then vanish while one was looking at them. Fairy women used to go into houses and talk and then vanish. The general belief was that the fairies were spirits who could make themselves seen or not seen at will. And when they *took* people they *took* body and soul together.’

### **The Testimony of John Campbell, Ninety-four Years Old**

Our next witness from Barra is John Campbell, who is ninety-four years old, yet clear-headed. He was born on Barra at Sgalary, and lives near there now at Breuvaig. We were on our way to call at his home, when we met him coming on the road, with a cane in each hand and a small sack hanging from one of them. Michael saluted him as an old acquaintance, and then we all sat down on a big boulder in the warm sunshine beside the road to talk. The first thing John wanted was tobacco, and when this was supplied we gradually led from one subject to another until he was talking about fairies. And this is what he said about them:—

*The Fairy and the Fountain.*—‘I had a companion by the name of James Galbraith, who was drowned about forty years ago, and one time he was crossing from the west side of the island to the east side, to the township called Sgalary, and feeling thirsty took a drink out of a spring well on the mountain-side. After he had taken a drink, he looked about him and saw a woman clad in green, and imagined that no woman would be clad in such a colour except a fairy woman. He went on his way, and when he hadn’t gone far, looked back, and, as he looked, saw the woman vanish out of his sight. He afterwards reported the incident at his father’s house in Sgalary, and his father said he also had seen a woman clad in clothes of green at the same place some nights before.’

*A Step-son Pitied by the Fairies.*—‘I heard my father say that a neighbour of his father, that is of my grandfather, was married twice, and had three children from the first marriage, and when married for the second time, a son and daughter. His second wife did not seem to be kind enough to

the children of the first wife, neglecting their food and clothing and keeping them constantly at hard work in the fields and at herding.

‘One morning when the man and his second wife were returning from mass they passed the pasture where their cows were grazing and heard the enjoyable *skirrels* of the bagpipes. The father said, “What may this be?” and going off the road found the eldest son of the first wife playing the bagpipes to his heart’s pleasure; and asked him earnestly, “How did you come to play the bagpipes so suddenly, or where did you get this splendid pair of bagpipes?” The boy replied, “An old man came to me while I was in the action of roasting pots in a pit-fire and said, ‘Your step-mother is bad to you and in ill-will towards you.’ I told the old man I was sensible that that was the case, and then he said to me, ‘If I give you a trade will you be inclined to follow it?’ I said yes, and the old man then continued, ‘How would you like to be a piper by trade?’ ‘I would gladly become a piper,’ says I, ‘but what am I to do without the bagpipes and the tunes to play?’ ‘I’ll supply the bagpipes,’ he said, ‘and as long as you have them you’ll never want for the most delightful tunes.’” The male descendants of the boy in question were all famous pipers thereafter, and the last of them was a piper to the late Cluny MacPherson of Cluny.’

*Nature of Fairies.*—At this point, Michael turned the trend of John’s thoughts to the nature of fairies, with the following result:—‘The general belief of the people here during my father’s lifetime was that the fairies were more of the nature of spirits than of men made of flesh and blood, but that they so appeared to the naked eye that no difference could be marked in their forms from that of any human being, except that they were more diminutive. I have heard my father say it was the case that fairy women used to take away children from their cradles and leave different children in their places, and that these children who were left would turn out to be old men.

‘At Barra Head, a fairy woman used to come to a man’s window almost every night as though looking to see if the family was home. The man grew suspicious, and decided the fairy woman was watching her chance to steal his wife, so he proposed a plan. It was then and still is the custom after

thatching a house to rope it across with heather-spun ropes, and, at the time, the man was busy spinning some of them; and he told his wife to take his place that night to spin the heather-rope, and said he would take her spinning-wheel. They were thus placed when the fairy woman made the usual look in at the window, and she seeing that her intention was understood, said to the man, "You are yourself at the spinning-wheel and your wife is spinning the heather-rope."

'I have heard it said that the fairies live in knolls on a higher level than that of the ground in general, and that fairy songs are heard from the faces of high rocks. The fairies of the air (the fairy or spirit hosts) are different from those in the rocks. A man whom I've seen, Roderick MacNeil, was lifted by the hosts and left three miles from where he was taken up. The hosts went at about midnight. A man awake at midnight is in danger. Cows and horses are sometimes shot in place of men' (and why, will be explained by later witnesses).

*Father MacDonald's Opinions.*—We then asked about the late Rev. Donald MacDonald, who had the reputation of knowing all about fairies and spirits when he lived here in these islands, and John said:—"I have heard my wife say that she questioned Father MacDonald, who was then a parish priest here in Barra, and for whom she was a housekeeper, if it was possible that such beings or spirits as fairies were in existence. He said "Yes", and that they were those who left Heaven after the fallen angels; and that those going out after the fallen angels had gone out were so numerous and kept going so long that St. Michael notified Christ that the throne was fast emptying, and when Christ saw the state of affairs he ordered the doors of Heaven to be closed at once, saying as he gave the order, "Who is out is out and who is in is in." And the fairies are as numerous now as ever they were before the beginning of the world.' (Cf. pp. 47, 53, 67, 76, 85, 109, 113, 116, 129, 154, 205, 212.)

Here we left John, and he, continuing on his way up the mountain road in an opposite direction from us and round a turn, disappeared almost as a fairy might.

## An Aged Piper's Testimony

We introduce now as a witness Donald McKinnon, ninety-six years old, a piper by profession; and not only is he the oldest man on Barra, but also the oldest man among all our witnesses. He was born on the Island of South Uist, one of the Western Hebrides north of Barra, and came to Barra in 1836, where he has lived ever since. In spite of being four years less than a hundred in age, he greeted us very heartily, and as he did not wish us to sit inside, for his chimney happened not to be drawing very well, and was filling the straw-thatched cottage with peat smoke, we sat down outside on the grass and began talking; and as we came to fairies this is what he said:

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*Nature of Fairies.*—‘I believe that fairies exist as a tribe of spirits, and appear to us in the form of men and women. People who saw fairies can yet describe them as they appeared dressed in green. No doubt there are fairies in other countries as well as here.

‘In my experience there was always a good deal of difference between the fairies and the hosts. The fairies were supposed to be living without material food, whereas the hosts were supposed to be living upon their own booty. Generally, the hosts were evil and the fairies good, though I have heard that the fairies used to *take* cattle and leave their old men rolled up in the hides. One night an old witch was heard to say to the fairies outside the fold, “We cannot get anything to-night.” The old men who were left behind in the hides of the animals *taken*, usually disappeared very suddenly. I saw two men who used to be lifted by the hosts. They would be carried from South Uist as far south as Barra Head, and as far north as Harris. Sometimes when these men were ordered by the hosts to kill men on the road they would kill instead either a horse or a cow; for in that way, so long as an animal was killed, the injunction of the hosts was fulfilled.’ To illustrate at this point the idea of fairies, Donald repeated the same legend told by our former witness, John Campbell, about the emptying of Heaven and the doors being closed to keep the remainder of its population in. Then he told the following story about fairies:—



*The Fairy-Belt.*—‘I heard of an apprentice to carpentry who was working with his master at the building of a boat, a little distance from his house, and near the sea. He went to work one morning and forgot a certain tool which he needed in the boat-building. He returned to his carpenter-shed to get it, and found the shed filled with fairy men and women. On seeing him they ran away so greatly confused that one of the women forgot her gird (belt), and he picked it up. In a little while she came back for the gird, and asked him to give it her, but he refused to do so. Thereupon she promised him that he should be made master of his trade wherever his lot should fall without serving further apprenticeship. On that condition he gave her the gird; and rising early next morning he went to the yard where the boat was a-building and put in two planks so perfectly that when the master arrived and saw them, he said to him, “Are you aware of anybody being in the building-yard last night, for I see by the work done that I am more likely to be an apprentice than the person who put in those two planks, whoever he is. Was it you that did it?” The reply was in the affirmative, and the apprentice told his master the circumstances under which he gained the rapid mastership of his trade.’

### **Across the Mountains**

It was nearing sunset now, and a long mountain-climb was ahead of us, and one more visit that evening, before we should begin our return to Castlebay, and so after this story we said a hearty good-bye to Donald, with regret at leaving him. When we reached the mountain-side, one of the rarest of Barra’s sights greeted us. To the north and south in the golden glow of a September twilight we saw the long line of the Outer Hebrides like the rocky backbone of some submerged continent. The scene and colours on the land and ocean and in the sky seemed more like some magic vision, reflected from Faerie by the ‘good people’ for our delight, than a thing of our own world. Never was air clearer or sea calmer, nor could there be air sweeter than that in the mystic mountain-stillness holding the perfume of

millions of tiny blossoms of purple and white heather; and as the last honey-bees were leaving the beautiful blossoms their humming came to our ears like low, strange music from Fairyland.

### **Marian MacLean of Barra, and her Testimony**

Our next witness to testify is a direct descendant of the ancient MacNeils of Barra. Her name now is Marian MacLean; and she lives in the mountainous centre of Barra at Upper Borge. She is many years younger than the men who have testified, and one of the most industrious women on the island. It was already dark and past dinner-time when we entered her cottage, and so, as we sat down before a blazing peat-fire, she at once offered us some hot milk and biscuits, which we were only too glad to accept. And, as we ate, we talked first about our hard climb in the darkness across the mountains, and through the thick heather-bushes, and then about the big rock which has a key-hole in it, for it contains a secret entrance to a fairy palace. We had examined it in the twilight as we came through the mountain pass which it guards, and my guide Michael had assured me that more than one islander, crossing at the hour we were, had seen some of the fairies near it. We waited in front of the big rock in hopes one might appear for our benefit, but, in spite of our strong belief that there are fairies there, not a single one would come out. Perhaps they came and we couldn't see them; who knows?

*Fairies and Fairy Hosts ('Sluagh').*<sup>39</sup>—‘O yes,’ Marian said, as she heard Michael and myself talking over our hot milk, ‘there are fairies there, for I was told that the Pass was a notable fairy haunt.’ Then I said through Michael, ‘Can you tell us something about what these fairies are?’ And from that time, save for a few interruptions natural in conversation, we listened and Marian talked, and told stories as follows:—

‘Generally, the fairies are to be seen after or about sunset, and walk on the ground as we do, whereas the hosts travel in the air above places inhabited by people. The hosts used to go after the fall of night, and more particularly about midnight. You'd hear them going in fine weather against

a wind like a covey of birds. And they were in the habit of lifting men in South Uist, for the hosts need men to help in shooting their javelins from their bows against women in the action of milking cows, or against any person working at night in a house over which they pass. And I have heard of good sensible men whom the hosts took, shooting a horse or cow in place of the person ordered to be shot.

‘There was a man who had only one cow and one daughter. The daughter was milking the cow at night when the hosts were passing, and that human being whom the hosts had lifted with them was her father’s neighbour. And this neighbour was ordered by the hosts to shoot the daughter as she was milking, but, knowing the father and daughter, he shot the cow instead. The next morning he went where the father was and said to him, “You are missing the cow.” “Yes,” said the father, “I am.” And the man who had shot the cow said, “Are you not glad your cow and not your daughter was *taken*? For I was ordered to shoot your daughter and I shot your cow, in order to show blood on my arrow.” “I am very glad of what you have done if that was the case,” the father replied. “It was the case,” the neighbour said.

‘My father and grandfather knew a man who was carried by the hosts from South Uist here to Barra. I understand when the hosts take away earthly men they require another man to help them. But the hosts must be spirits. My opinion is that they are both spirits of the dead and other spirits not the dead. A child was taken by the hosts and returned after one night and one day, and found at the back of the house with the palms of its hands in the holes in the wall, and with no life in its body. It was dead in the spirit. It is believed that when people are dropped from a great height by the hosts they are killed by the fall. As to fairies, my firm opinion is that they are spirits who appear in the shape of human beings.’

The question was now asked whether the fairies were anything like the dead, and Marian hesitated about answering. She thought they were like the dead, but not to be identified with them. The fallen-angel idea concerning fairies was an obstacle she could not pass, for she said, ‘When the fallen angels were cast out of Heaven God commanded them thus:—“You will go

to take up your abodes in crevices, under the earth, in mounds, or soil, or rocks.” And according to this command they have been condemned to inhabit the places named for a certain period of time, and when it is expired before the consummation of the world, they will be seen as numerous as ever.’

Now we heard two good stories, the first about fairy women spinning for a mortal, the second about a wonderful changeling who was a magic musician:—

*Fairy-Women Spinners.*—‘I have heard my father, Alexander MacNeil, who was well known to Mr. [Alexander] Carmichael and to Mr. J. F. Campbell of Islay, say that his father knew a woman in the neighbourhood who was in a hurry to have her stock of wool spun and made into cloth, and one night this woman secretly wished to have some women to help her. So the following morning there appeared at her house six or seven fairy women in long green robes, all alike chanting, “A wool-card, and a spinning-wheel.” And when they were supplied with the instruments they were so very desirous to get, they all set to work, and by midday of that morning the cloth was going through the process of the hand-loom. But they were not satisfied with finishing the work the woman had set before them, but asked for new employment. The woman had no more spinning or weaving to be done, and began to wonder how she was to get the women out of the house. So she went into her neighbour’s house and informed him of her position in regard to the fairy women. The old man asked what they were saying. “They are earnestly petitioning for some work to do, and I have no more to give them,” the woman replied. “Go you in,” he said to her, “and tell them to spin the sand, and if then they do not move from your house, go out again and yell in at the door that Dun Borge is in fire!” The first plan had no effect, but immediately on hearing the cry, “Dun Borge is in fire!” the fairy women disappeared invisibly. And as they went, the woman heard the melancholy wail, “Dun Borge is in fire! Dun Borge is in fire! And what will become of our hammers and anvil?”—for there was a smithy in the fairy-dwelling.’

*The Tailor and the Changeling.*—‘There was a young wife of a young man who lived in the township of Allasdale, and the pair had just had their first child. One day the mother left her baby in its cradle to go out and do some shearing, and when she returned the child was crying in a most unusual fashion. She fed him as usual on porridge and milk, but he wasn’t satisfied with what seemed to her enough for any one of his age, yet every suspicion escaped her attention. As it happened, at the time there was a web of home-made cloth in the house waiting for the tailor. The tailor came and began to work up the cloth. As the woman was going out to her customary shearing operation, she warned the tailor if he heard the child continually crying not to pay much attention to it, adding she would attend to it when she came home, for she feared the child would delay him in his work.

‘All went well till about noon, when the tailor observed the child rising up on its elbow and stretching its hand to a sort of shelf above the cradle and taking down from it a yellow chanter [of a bagpipe]. And then the child began to play. Immediately after the child began to play the chanter, the house filled with young fairy women all clad in long green robes, who began to dance, and the tailor had to dance with them. About two o’clock that same afternoon the women disappeared unknown to the tailor, and the chanter disappeared from the hands of the child also unknown to the tailor; and the child was in the cradle crying as usual.

‘The wife came home to make the dinner, and observed that the tailor was not so far advanced with his work as he ought to be in that space of time. However, when the fairy women disappeared, the child had enjoined upon the tailor never to tell what he had seen. The tailor promised to be faithful to the child’s injunctions, and so he said nothing to the mother.

‘The second day the wife left for her occupation as usual, and told the tailor to be more attentive to his work than the day before. A second time at the same hour of the day the child in the cradle, appearing more like an old man than a child, took the chanter and began to play. The same fairy women filled the house again, and repeated their dance, and the tailor had to join them.

‘Naturally the tailor was as far behind with his work the second day as the first day, and it was very noticeable to the woman of the house when she returned. She thereupon requested him to tell her what the matter might be. Then he said to her, “I urge upon you after going to bed to-night not to fondle that child, because he is not your child, nor is he a child: he is an old fairy man. And to-morrow, at dead tide, go down to the shore and wrap him in your plaid and put him upon a rock and begin to pick that shell-fish which is called limpet, and for your life do not leave the shore until such a time as the tide will flow so high that you will scarcely be able to wade in to the main shore.” The woman complied with the tailor’s advice, and when she had waded to the main shore and stood there looking at the child on the rock, it cried to her, “You had a great need to do what you have done. Otherwise you’d have seen another ending of your turn; but blessing be to you and curses on your adviser.” When the wife arrived home her own natural child was in the cradle.’

### **The Testimony of Murdoch MacLean**

The husband of Marian MacLean had entered while the last stories were being told, and when they were ended the spirit was on him, and wishing to give his testimony he began:—

*Lachlann’s Fairy Mistress.*—‘My grandmother, Catherine MacInnis, used to tell about a man named Lachlann, whom she knew, being in love with a fairy woman. The fairy woman made it a point to see Lachlann every night, and he being worn out with her began to fear her. Things got so bad at last that he decided to go to America to escape the fairy woman. As soon as the plan was fixed, and he was about to emigrate, women who were milking at sunset out in the meadows heard very audibly the fairy woman singing this song:—

What will the brown-haired woman do  
When Lachlann is on the billows?

‘Lachlann emigrated to Cape Breton, landing in Nova Scotia; and in his first letter home to his friends he stated that the same fairy woman was haunting him there in America.’<sup>40</sup>

*Abduction of a Bridegroom.*—‘I have heard it from old people that a couple, newly married, were on their way to the home of the bride’s father, and for some unknown reason the groom fell behind the procession, and seeing a fairy-dwelling open along the road was taken into it. No one could ever find the least trace of where he went, and all hope of seeing him again was given up. The man remained with the fairies so long that when he returned two generations had disappeared during the lapse of time. The township in which his bride’s house used to be was depopulated and in ruins for upwards of twenty years, but to him the time had seemed only a few hours; and he was just as fresh and youthful as when he went in the fairy-dwelling.’

*Nature of Fairies.*—Previous to his story-telling Murdoch had heard us discussing the nature and powers of fairies, and at the end of this account he volunteered, without our asking for it, an opinion of his own:—‘This (the story just told by him) leads me to believe that the spirit and body [of a mortal] are somehow mystically combined by fairy enchantment, for the fairies had a mighty power of enchanting natural people, and could transform the physical body in some way. It cannot be but that the fairies are spirits. According to my thinking and belief they cannot be anything but spirits. My firm belief, however, is that they are not the spirits of dead men, but are the fallen angels.’

Then his wife Marian had one more story to add, and she at once, when she could, began:—

*The Messenger and the Fairies.*—‘Yes, I have heard the following incident took place here on the Island of Barra about one hundred years ago:—A young woman taken ill suddenly sent a messenger in all haste to the doctor for medicine. On his return, the day being hot and there being five miles to walk, he sat down at the foot of a knoll and fell asleep; and was awakened by hearing a song to the following air: “Ho, ho, ho, hi, ho,

ho. Ill it becomes a messenger on an important message to sleep on the ground in the open air.””

And with this, for the hour was late and dark, and we were several miles from Castlebay, we bade our good friends adieu, and began to hunt for a road out of the little mountain valley where Murdoch and Marian guard their cows and sheep. And all the way to the hotel Michael and I discussed the nature of fairies. Just before midnight we saw the welcome lights in Castlebay across the heather-covered hills, and we both entered the hotel to talk. There was a blazing fire ready for us and something to eat. Before I took my final leave of my friend and guide, I asked him to dictate for me his private opinions about fairies, what they are and how they appear to men, and he was glad to meet my request. Here is what he said about the famous folk-lorist, the late Mr. J. F. Campbell, with whom he often worked in Barra, and for himself:—

### **Michael Buchanan’s Deposition Concerning Fairies**

‘I was with the late Mr. J. F. Campbell during his first and second tour of the Island of Barra in search of legendary lore strictly connected with fairies, and I know from daily conversing with him about fairies that he held them to be spirits appearing to the naked eye of the spectator as any of the present or former generations of men and women, except that they were smaller in stature. And I know equally that he, holding them to be spirits, thought they could appear or disappear at will. My own firm belief is that the fairies were or are only spirits which were or are seen in the shape of human beings, but smaller as regards stature. I also firmly believe in the existence of fairies as such; and accept the modern and ancient traditions respecting the ways and customs of various fairy tribes, such as John Mackinnon, the old piper, and John Campbell, and the MacLeans told us. And I therefore have no hesitation in agreeing with the views held by the late Mr. J. F. Campbell regarding fairies.’



## **The Reciters' Lament, and their Story**

The following material, so truly Celtic in its word-colour and in the profound note of sadness and lamentation dominating it, may very appropriately conclude our examination of the Fairy-Faith of Scotland, by giving us some insight into the mind of the Scotch peasants of two generations ago, and into the then prevailing happy social environment under which their belief in fairies flourished. For our special use Dr. Alexander Carmichael has rendered it out of the original Gaelic, as this was taken down by him in various versions in the Western Hebrides. One version was recited by Ann Macneill, of Barra, in the year 1865, another by Angus Macleod, of Harris, in 1877. In relation to their belief in fairies the anti-clerical bias of the reciters is worth noting as a curious phenomenon:—

‘That is as I heard when a hairy little fellow upon the knee of my mother. My mother was full of stories and songs of music and chanting. My two ears never heard musical fingers more preferable for me to hear than the chanting of my mother. If there were quarrels among children, as there were, and as there will be, my beloved mother would set us to dance there and then. She herself or one of the other crofter women of the townland would sing to us the mouth-music. We would dance there till we were seven times tired. A stream of sweat would be falling from us before we stopped—hairful little lassies and stumpy little fellows. These are scattered to-day! scattered to-day over the wide world! The people of those times were full of music and dancing stories and traditions. The clerics have extinguished these. May ill befall them! And what have the clerics put in their place? Beliefs about creeds, and disputations about denominations and churches! May lateness be their lot! It is they who have put the cross round the heads and the entanglements round the feet of the people. The people of the Gaeldom of to-day are anear perishing for lack of the famous feats of their fathers. The black clerics have suppressed every noble custom among the people of the Gaeldom—precious customs that will never return, no never again return.’ (Now follows what the Reciters heard upon the knee of their mother):—

“I have never seen a man fairy nor a woman fairy, but my mother saw a troop of them. She herself and the other maidens of the townland were once out upon the summer *sheiling* (grazing). They were milking the cows, in the evening gloaming, when they observed a flock of fairies reeling and setting upon the green plain in front of the knoll. And, oh King! but it was they the fairies themselves that had the right to the dancing, and not the children of men! Bell-helmets of blue silk covered their heads, and garments of green satin covered their bodies, and sandals of yellow membrane covered their feet. Their heavy brown hair was streaming down their waist, and its lustre was of the fair golden sun of summer. Their skin was as white as the swan of the wave, and their voice was as melodious as the mavis of the wood, and they themselves were as beauteous of feature and as lithe of form as a picture, while their step was as light and stately and their minds as sportive as the little red hind of the hill. The damsel children of the *sheiling*-fold never saw sight but them, no never sight but them, never aught so beautiful.

“There is not a wave of prosperity upon the fairies of the knoll, no, not a wave. There is no growth nor increase, no death nor withering upon the fairies. Seed unfortunate they! They went away from the Paradise with the One of the Great Pride. When the Father commanded the doors closed down and up, the intermediate fairies had no alternative but to leap into the holes of the earth, where they are, and where they will be.”

‘This is what I heard upon the knee of my beloved mother. Blessings be with her ever evermore!’

## IV. IN THE ISLE OF MAN

Introduction by Sophia Morrison, Hon. Secretary of the Manx Language Society.

The Manx hierarchy of fairy beings people hills and glens, caves and rivers, mounds and roads; and their name is legion. Apparently there is not

a place in the island but has its fairy legend. Sir Walter Scott said that the 'Isle of Man, beyond all other places in Britain, was a peculiar depository of the fairy-traditions, which, on the Island being conquered by the Norse, became in all probability chequered with those of Scandinavia, from a source peculiar and more direct than that by which they reached Scotland and Ireland'.

A good Manxman, however, does not speak of fairies—the word *ferish*, a corruption of the English, did not exist in the island one hundred and fifty years ago. He talks of 'The Little People' (*Mooijer veggey*), or, in a more familiar mood, of 'Themselves', and of 'Little Boys' (*Guillyn veggey*), or 'Little Fellas'. In contradistinction to mortals he calls them 'Middle World Men', for they are believed to dwell in a world of their own, being neither good enough for Heaven nor bad enough for Hell.

At the present moment almost all the older Manx peasants hold to this belief in fairies quite firmly, but with a certain dread of them; and, to my knowledge, two old ladies of the better class yet leave out cakes and water for the fairies every night. The following story, illustrative of the belief, was told to me by Bill Clarke:—

'Once while I was fishing from a ledge of rocks that runs out into the sea at Lag-ny-Keilley, a dense grey mist began to approach the land, and I thought I had best make for home while the footpath above the rocks was visible. When getting my things together I heard what sounded like a lot of children coming out of school. I lifted my head, and behold ye, there was a fleet of fairy boats each side of the rock. Their riding-lights were shining like little stars, and I heard one of the *Little Fellas* shout, "*Hraaghyn boght as earish broigh, skeddán dy liooar ec yn mooijer seihll shoh, cha nel veg ain*" (Poor times and dirty weather, and herring enough at the people of this world, nothing at us). Then they dropped off and went agate o' the flitters.'

'Willy-the-Fairy,' as he is called, who lives at Rhenass, says he often hears the fairies singing and playing up the Glen o' nights. I have heard him sing airs which he said he had thus learned from the *Little People*.<sup>41</sup>

Again, there is a belief that at Keeill Moirrey (Mary's Church), near Glen Meay, a little old woman in a red cloak is sometimes seen coming

over the mountain towards the *keeill*, ringing a bell, just about the hour when church service begins. Keeill Moirrey is one of the early little Celtic cells, probably of the sixth century, of which nothing remains but the foundations.

And the following prayer, surviving to our own epoch, is most interesting. It shows, in fact, pure paganism; and we may judge from it that the ancient Manx people regarded Manannan, the great Tuatha De Danann god, in his true nature, as a spiritual being, a Lord of the Sea, and as belonging to the complex fairy hierarchy. This prayer was given to me by a Manxwoman nearly one hundred years old, who is still living. She said it had been used by her grandfather, and that her father prayed the same prayer—substituting St. Patrick’s name for Manannan’s:—

*Manannan beg mac y Leirr, fer vannee yn Ellan,  
Bannee shin as nyn maatey, mie goll magh  
As cheet stiagh ny share lesh bio as marroo “sy vaatey”.*

(Little Manannan son of Leirr, who blest our Island,  
Bless us and our boat, well going out  
And better coming in with living and dead [fish] in the boat).

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It seems to me that no one of the various theories so far advanced accounts in itself for the Fairy-Faith. There is always a missing factor, an unknown quantity which has yet to be discovered. No doubt the Pygmy Theory explains a good deal. In some countries a tradition has been handed down of the times when there were races of diminutive men in existence—beings so small that their tiny hands could have used the flint arrow-heads and scrapers which are like toys to us. No such tradition exists at the present day in the Isle of Man, but one might have filtered down from the far-off ages and become innate in the folk-memory, and now, unknown to the Manx peasant, may possibly suggest to his mind the troops of *Little People* in the shadowy glen or on the lonely mountain-side. Again, the rustling of

the leaves or the sough of the wind may be heard by the peasant as strange and mysterious voices, or the trembling shadow of a bush may appear to him as an unearthly being. Natural facts, explainable by modern science, may easily remain dark mysteries to those who live quiet lives close to Nature, far from sophisticated towns, and whose few years of schooling have left the depths of their being undisturbed, only, as it were, ruffling the shallows.

But this is not enough. Even let it be granted that nine out of every ten cases of experiences with fairies can be analysed and explained away—there remains the tenth. In this tenth case one is obliged to admit that there is something at work which we do not understand, some force in play which, as yet, we know not. In spite of ourselves we feel ‘There’s Powers that’s in’. These Powers are not necessarily what the superstitious call ‘supernatural’. We realize now that there is nothing supernatural—that what used to be so called is simply something that we do not understand at present. Our forefathers would have thought the telephone, the X-rays, and wireless telegraphy things ‘supernatural’. It is more than possible that our descendants may make discoveries equally marvellous in the realms both of mind and matter, and that many things, which nowadays seem to the materialistically-minded the creations of credulous fancy, may in the future be understood and recognized as part of the one great scheme of things.

Some persons are certainly more susceptible than others to these unknown forces. Most people know reliable instances of telepathy and presentiment amongst their acquaintances. It seems not at all contrary to reason that both matter and mind, in knowledge of which we have not gone so very far after all, may exist in forms as yet entirely unknown to us. After all, beings with bodies and personalities different from our own may well inhabit the unseen world around us: the Fairy Hound, white as driven snow, may show himself at times among his mundane companions; *Fenodyree* may do the farm-work for those whom he favours; the *Little People* may sing and dance o’ nights in Colby Glen. Let us not say it is ‘impossible’.

Peel, Isle of Man,

September 1910.

## On the Slopes of South Barrule

I was introduced to the ways and nature of Manx fairies in what is probably the most fairy-haunted part of the isle—the southern slopes of South Barrule, the mountain on whose summit Manannan is said to have had his stronghold, and whence he worked his magic, hiding the kingdom in dense fog whenever he beheld in the distance the coming of an enemy's ship or fleet. And from a representative of the older generation, Mrs. Samuel Leece, who lives at Ballamodda, a pleasant village under the shadow of South Barrule, I heard the first story:—

*Baby and Table Moved by Fairies.*—‘I have been told of *their* (the fairies’) taking babies, though I can’t be sure it is true. But this did happen to my own mother in this parish of Kirk Patrick about eighty years since: She was in bed with her baby, but wide awake, when she felt the baby pulled off her arm and heard the rush of *them*. Then she mentioned the Almighty’s name, and, as *they* were hurrying away, a little table alongside the bed went round about the floor twenty times. Nobody was in the room with my mother, and she always allowed it was the *little fellows*.’

## Manx Tales in a Snow-bound Farm-house

When our interesting conversation was over, Mrs. Leece directed me to her son’s farm-house, where her husband, Mr. Samuel Leece, then happened to be; and going there through the snow-drifts, I found him with his son and the family within. The day was just the right sort to stir Manx memories, and it was not long before the best of stories about the ‘little people’ were being told in the most natural way, and to the great delight of the children. The grandfather, who is eighty-six years of age, sat by the open fire smoking; and he prepared the way for the stories (three of which we record)

by telling about a ghost seen by himself and his father, and by the announcement that 'the fairies are thought to be spirits'.

*Under 'Fairy' Control.*—'About fifty years ago,' said Mr. T. Leece, the son, 'Paul Taggart, my wife's uncle, a tailor by trade, had for an apprentice, Humphrey Keggan, a young man eighteen or nineteen years of age; and it often happened that while the two of them would be returning home at nightfall, the apprentice would suddenly disappear from the side of the tailor, and even in the midst of a conversation, as soon as they had crossed the burn in the field down there (indicating an adjoining field). And Taggart could not see nor hear Humphrey go. The next morning Humphrey would come back, but so worn out that he could not work, and he always declared that *little men* had come to him in crowds, and used him as a horse, and that with them he had travelled all night across fields and over hedges.' The wife of the narrator substantiated this strange psychological story by adding:—'This is true, because I know my Uncle Paul too well to doubt what he says.' And she then related the two following stories:—

*Heifer Killed by Fairy Woman's Touch.*—'Aunt Jane was coming down the road on the other side of South Barrule when she saw a strange woman' (who Mr. T. Leece suggested was a witch) 'appear in the middle of the gorse and walk right over the gorse and heather in a place where no person could walk. Then she observed the woman go up to a heifer and put her hand on it; and within a few days that heifer was dead.'

*The Fairy Dog.*—'This used to happen about one hundred years ago, as my mother has told me:—Where my grandfather John Watterson was reared, just over near Kerroo Kiel (Narrow Quarter), all the family were sometimes sitting in the house of a cold winter night, and my great grandmother and her daughters at their wheels spinning, when a little white dog would suddenly appear in the room. Then every one there would have to drop their work and prepare for *the company* to come in: they would put down a fire and leave fresh water for *them*, and hurry off upstairs to bed. They could hear *them* come, but could never see them, only the dog. The dog was a fairy dog, and a sure sign of their coming.'

## Testimony of a Herb-Doctor and Seer

At Ballasalla I was fortunate enough to meet one of the most interesting of its older inhabitants, John Davies, a Celtic medicine-man, who can cure most obstinate maladies in men or animals with secret herbs, and who knows very much about witchcraft and the charms against it. ‘Witches are as common as ducks walking barefooted,’ he said, using the duck simile, which is a popular Manx one; and he cited two particular instances from his own experience. But for us it is more important to know that John Davies is also an able seer. The son of a weaver, he was born in County Down, Ireland, seventy-eight years ago; but in earliest boyhood he came with his people to the Isle of Man, and grew up in the country near Ramsay, and so thoroughly has he identified himself with the island and its lore, and even with its ancient language, that for our purposes he may well be considered a Manxman. His testimony about Manx fairies is as follows:—

*Actual Fairies Described.*—‘I am only a poor ignorant man; when I was married I couldn’t say the word “matrimony” in the right way. But one does not have to be educated to see fairies, and I have seen them many a time. I have seen them with the naked eye as numerous as I have seen scholars coming out of Ballasalla school; and I have been seeing them since I was eighteen to twenty years of age. The last one I saw was in Kirk Michael. Before education came into the island more people could see the fairies; now very few people can see them. But *they* (the fairies) are as thick on the Isle of Man as ever *they* were. *They* throng the air, and darken Heaven, and rule this lower world. It is only twenty-one miles from this world up to the first heaven.<sup>42</sup> There are as many kinds of fairies as populations in our world. I have seen some who were about two and a half feet high; and some who were as big as we are. I think very many such fairies as these last are the lost souls of the people who died before the Flood. At the Flood all the world was drowned; but the Spirit which God breathed into Adam will never be drowned, or burned, and it is as much in the sea as on the land. Others of the fairies are evil spirits: our Saviour drove a legion of devils into a herd of swine; the swine were choked, but not the devils. You can’t



drown devils; it is spirits they are, and just like a shadow on the wall.’ I here asked about the personal aspects of most fairies of human size, and my friend said:—‘*They* appear to me in the same dress as in the days when they lived here on earth; the spirit itself is only what God blew into Adam as the breath of life.’

It seems to me that, on the whole, John Davies has had genuine visions, but that whatever he may have seen has been very much coloured in interpretation by his devout knowledge of the Christian Bible, and by his social environment, as is self-evident.

### **Testimony of a Ballasalla Manxwoman**

A well-informed Manxwoman, of Ballasalla, who lives in the ancient stone house wherein she was born, and in which before her lived her grandparents, offers this testimony:—

*Concerning Fairies.*—‘I’ve heard a good deal of talk about fairies, but never believed in them myself; the old people thought them the ghosts of the dead or some such things. They were like people who had gone before (that is, dead). If there came a strange sudden knock or noises, or if a tree took a sudden shaking when there was no wind, people used to make out it was caused by the fairies. On the 11th of May<sup>43</sup> we used to gather mountain-ash (*Cuirn*) with red berries on it, and make crosses out of its sprigs, and put them over the doors, so that the fairies would not come in. My father always saw that this was done; he said we could have no luck during the year if we forgot to do it.’

### **Testimony Given in a Joiner’s Shop**

George Gelling, of Ballasalla, a joiner, has a local reputation for knowing much about the fairies, and so I called on him at his workshop. This is what he told me:—

*Seeing the Fairies.*—‘I was making a coffin here in the shop, and, after tea, my apprentice was late returning; he was out by the hedge just over there looking at a crowd of *little people* kicking and dancing. One of them came up and asked him what he was looking at; and this made him run back to the shop. When he described what he had seen, I told him they were nothing but fairies.’

*Hearing Fairy Music.*—‘Up by the abbey on two different occasions I have heard the fairies. They were playing tunes not of this world, and on each occasion I listened for nearly an hour.’

*Mickleby and the Fairy Woman.*—‘A man named Mickleby was coming from Derbyhaven at night, when by a certain stream he met two ladies. He saluted them, and then walked along with them to Ballahick Farm. There he saw a house lit up, and they took him into it to a dance. As he danced, he happened to wipe away his sweat with a part of the dress of one of the two strange women who was his partner. After this adventure, whenever Mickleby was lying abed at night, the woman with whom he danced would appear standing beside his bed. And the only way to drive her away was to throw over her head and Mickleby a linen sheet which had never been bleached.’

*Nature of Fairies.*—‘The fairies are spirits. I think they are in this country yet: A man below here forgot his cow, and at a late hour went to look for her, and saw that crowds of fairies like little boys were with him. [St.] Paul said that spirits are thick in the air, if only we could see them; and we call spirits fairies. I think the old people here in the island thought of fairies in the same way.’

*The Fairies’ Revenge.*—William Oates now happened to come into the workshop, and being as much interested in the subject under discussion as ourselves, offered various stories, of which the following is a type:—‘A man named Watterson, who used often to see the fairies in his house at Colby playing in the moonlight, on one occasion heard them coming just as he was going to bed. So he went out to the spring to get fresh water for them; and coming into the house put the can down on the floor, saying,

“Now, little beggars, drink away.” And at that (an insult to the fairies) the water was suddenly thrown upon him.’

### **A Vicar’s Testimony**

When I called on the Rev. J. M. Spicer, vicar of Malew parish, at his home near Castletown, he told me this very curious story:—

*The Taking of Mrs. K*——.—‘The belief in fairies is quite a living thing here yet. For example, old Mrs. K——, about a year ago, told me that on one occasion, when her daughter had been in Castletown during the day, she went out to the road at nightfall to see if her daughter was yet in sight, whereupon a whole crowd of fairies suddenly surrounded her, and began taking her off toward South Barrule Mountain; and, she added, “I couldn’t get away from *them* until I had called my son.”’

### **A Canon’s Testimony**

I am greatly indebted to the Rev. Canon Kewley, of Arbory, for the valuable testimony which follows, and especially for his kindness in allowing me to record what is one of the clearest examples of a collective hallucination I have heard about as occurring in the fairy-haunted regions of Celtic countries:—

*A Collective Hallucination*.—‘A good many things can be explained as natural phenomena, but there are some things which I think cannot be. For example, my sister and myself and our coachman, and apparently the horse, saw the same phenomenon at the same moment: one evening we were driving along an avenue in this parish when the avenue seemed to be blocked by a great crowd of people, like a funeral procession; and the crowd was so dense that we could not see through it. The throng was about thirty to forty yards away. When we approached, it melted away, and no person was anywhere in sight.’

*The Manx Fairy-Faith.*—‘Among the old people of this parish there is still a belief in fairies. About eighteen years ago, I buried a man, a staunch Methodist, who said he once saw the road full of fairies in the form of little black pigs, and that when he addressed them, “In the name of God what are ye?” they immediately vanished. He was certain they were the fairies. Other old people speak of the fairies as the *little folk*. The tradition is that the fairies once inhabited this island, but were banished for evil-doing. The elder-tree, in Manx *tramman*, is supposed to be inhabited by fairies. Through accident, one night a woman ran into such a tree, and was immediately stricken with a terrible swelling which her neighbours declared came from disturbing the fairies in the tree. This was on the borders of Arbory parish.’

The Canon favours the hypothesis that in much of the folk-belief concerning fairies and Fairyland there is present an instinct, as seen among all peoples, for communion with the other world, and that this instinct shows itself in another form in the Christian doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

### **Fairy Tales on Christmas Day**

The next morning, Christmas morning, I called at the picturesque roadside home of Mrs. Dinah Moore a Manxwoman living near Glen Meay; and she contributed the best single collection of Manx folk-legends I discovered on the island. The day was bright and frosty, and much snow still remained in the shaded nooks and hollows, so that a seat before the cheerful fire in Mrs. Moore’s cottage was very comfortable; and with most work suspended for the ancient day of festivities in honour of the Sun, re-born after its death at the hands of the Powers of Darkness, all conditions were favourable for hearing about fairies, and this may explain why such important results were obtained.

*Fairy Deceit.*—‘I heard of a man and wife who had no children. One night the man was out on horseback and heard a little baby crying beside

the road. He got off his horse to get the baby, and, taking it home, went to give it to his wife, and it was only a block of wood. And then the old fairies were outside yelling at the man: "*Eash un oie, s'cheap t'ou mollit!*" (Age one night, how easily thou art deceived!).'

*A Midwife's Strange Experience.*—'A strange man took a nurse to a place where a baby boy was born. After the birth, the man set out on a table two cakes, one of them broken and the other one whole, and said to the nurse: "Eat, eat; but don't eat of the cake which is broken nor of the cake which is whole." And the nurse said: "What in the name of the Lord am I going to eat?" At that all the fairies in the house disappeared; and the nurse was left out on a mountain-side alone.'

*A Fairy-Baking.*—'At night the fairies came into a house in Glen Rushen to bake. The family had put no water out for them; and a beggar-man who had been left lodging on the sofa downstairs heard the fairies say, "We have no water, so we'll take blood out of the toe of the servant who forgot our water." And from the girl's blood they mixed their dough. Then they baked their cakes, ate most of them, and poked pieces up under the thatched roof. The next day the servant-girl fell ill, and was ill until the old beggar-man returned to the house and cured her with a bit of the cake which he took from under the thatch.'

*A Changeling Musician.*—'A family at Dalby had a poor idiot baby, and when it was twenty years old it still sat by the fire just like a child. A tailor came to the house to work on a day when all the folks were out cutting corn, and the idiot was left with him. The tailor began to whistle as he sat on the table sewing, and the little idiot sitting by the fire said to him: "If you'll not tell anybody when they come in, I'll dance that tune for you." So the little fellow began to dance, and he could step it out splendidly. Then he said to the tailor: "If you'll not tell anybody when they come in, I'll play the fiddle for you." And the tailor and the idiot spent a very enjoyable afternoon together. But before the family came in from the fields, the poor idiot, as usual, was sitting in a chair by the fire, a big baby who couldn't hardly talk. When the mother came in she happened to say to the tailor, "You've a fine chap here," referring to the idiot. "Yes, indeed," said the

tailor, “we’ve had a very fine afternoon together; but I think we had better make a good fire and put him on it.” “Oh!” cried the mother, “the poor child could never even walk.” “Ah, but he can dance and play the fiddle, too,” replied the tailor. And the fire was made; but when the idiot saw that they were for putting him on it he pulled from his pocket a ball, and this ball went rolling on ahead of him, and he, going after it, was never seen again.’ After this strange story was finished I asked Mrs. Moore where she had heard it, and she said:—‘I have heard this story ever since I was a girl. I knew the house and family, and so did my mother. The family’s name was Cubbon.’

*The Fenodyree’s (or ‘Phynnodderee’s’) Disgust.*—‘During snowy weather, like this, the Fenodyree would gather in the sheep at night; and during the harvest season would do the threshing when all the family were abed. One time, however, just over here at Gordon Farm, the farmer saw him, and he was naked; and so the farmer put out a new suit of clothes for him. The Fenodyree came at night, and looking at the clothes with great disgust at the idea of wearing such things, said:—

*Bayrn da’n chione, doogh da’n chione,  
Cooat da’n dreeym, doogh da’n dreeym,  
Breechyn da’n toin, doogh da’n toin,  
Agh my she lhiat Gordon mooar,  
Cha nee lhiat Glion reagh Rushen.*

*(Cap for the head, alas! poor head,  
Coat for the back, alas! poor back,  
Breeches for the breech, alas! poor breech,  
But if big Gordon [farm] is thine,  
Thine is not the merry Glen of Rushen.)*<sup>44</sup>

And off he went to Glen Rushen for good.’

## Testimony from the Keeper of Peel Castle

From Mrs. Moore's house I walked on to Peel, where I was fortunate in meeting, in his own home, Mr. William Cashen, the well-known keeper of the famous old Peel Castle, within whose yet solid battlements stands the one true round tower outside of Ireland. I heard first of all about the fairy dog—the *Moddey Doo* (Manx for Black Dog)—which haunts the castle; and then Mr. Cashen related to me the following anecdotes and tales about Manx fairies:—

*Prayer against the Fairies.*—‘My father's and grandfather's idea was that the fairies tumbled out of the battlements of Heaven, falling earthward for three days and three nights as thick as hail; and that one third of them fell into the sea, one third on the land, and one third remained in the air, in which places they will remain till the Day of Judgement. The old Manx people always believed that this fall of the fairies was due to the first sin, pride; and here is their prayer against the fairies:—“*Jee saue mee voish cloan ny moyrn*” (God preserve me from the children of pride [or ambition]).’

*A Man's Two Wives.*—‘A Ballaleece woman was captured by the fairies; and, soon afterwards, her husband took a new wife, thinking the first one gone for ever. But not long after the marriage, one night the first wife appeared to her former husband and said to him, and the second wife overheard her: “You'll sweep the barn clean, and mind there is not one straw left on the floor. Then stand by the door, and at a certain hour a company of people on horseback will ride in, and you lay hold of that bridle of the horse I am on, and don't let it go.” He followed the directions carefully, but was unable to hold the horse: the second wife had put some straw on the barn floor under a bushel.’

*Sounds of Infinity.*—‘On Dalby Mountain, this side of Cronk-yn-Irree-Laa the old Manx people used to put their ears to the earth to hear the Sounds of Infinity (*Sheean-ny-Feaynid*), which were sounds like murmurs. They thought these sounds came from beings in space; for in their belief all space is filled with invisible beings.’<sup>45</sup>

## To the Memory of a Manx Scholar

Since the following testimony was written down, its author, the late Mr. John Nelson, of Ramsey, has passed out of our realm of life into the realm invisible. He was one of the few Manxmen who knew the Manx language really well, and the ancient traditions which it has preserved both orally and in books. In his kindly manner and with fervent loyalty toward all things Celtic, he gave me leave, during December 1909, to publish for the first time the interesting matter which follows; and, with reverence, we here place it on record to his memory:—

*A Blinding by Fairies.*—‘My grandfather, William Nelson, was coming home from the herring fishing late at night, on the road near Jurby, when he saw in a pea-field, across a hedge, a great crowd of *little fellows* in red coats dancing and making music. And as he looked, an old woman from among them came up to him and spat in his eyes, saying: “You’ll never see us again”; and I am told that he was blind afterwards till the day of his death. He was certainly blind for fourteen years before his death, for I often had to lead him around; but, of course, I am unable to say of my own knowledge that he became blind immediately after his strange experience, or if not until later in life; but as a young man he certainly had good sight, and it was believed that the fairies destroyed it.’

*The Fairy Tune.*—‘William Cain, of Glen Helen (formerly Rhenass), was going home in the evening across the mountains near Brook’s Park, when he heard music down below in a glen, and saw there a great glass house like a palace, all lit up. He stopped to listen, and when he had the new tune he went home to practise it on his fiddle; and recently he played the same fairy tune at Miss Sophia Morrison’s Manx entertainment in Peel.’

*Manannan the Magician.*—Mr. Nelson told a story about a *Buggane* or *Fenodyree*, such as we already have, and explained the *Glashtin* as a water-bull, supposed to be a goblin half cow and half horse, and then offered this tradition about Manannan:—‘It is said that Manannan was a great magician,



and that he used to place on the sea pea-shells, held open with sticks and with sticks for masts standing up in them, and then so magnify them that enemies beheld them as a strong fleet, and would not approach the island. Another tradition is that Manannan on his three legs (the Manx coat of arms) could travel from one end to the other of his isle with wonderful swiftness, moving like a wheel.’<sup>46</sup>

### **Testimony of a Farmer and Fisherman**

From the north of the island I returned to Peel, where I had arranged to meet new witnesses, and the first one of these is James Caugherty, a farmer and fisherman, born in Kirk Patrick fifty-eight years ago, who testified (in part) as follows:—

*Churn Worked by Fairies.*—‘Close by Glen Cam (Winding Glen), when I was a boy, our family often used to hear the empty churn working in the churn-house, when no person was near it, and they would say, “Oh, it’s the *little fellows*.”’

*A Remarkable Changeling Story.*—‘Forty to fifty years ago, between St. John’s and Foxdale, a boy, with whom I often played, came to our house at nightfall to borrow some candles, and while he was on his way home across the hills he suddenly saw a little boy and a little woman coming after him. If he ran, they ran, and all the time they gained on him. Upon reaching home he was speechless, his hands were altered (turned awry), and his feet also, and his fingernails had grown long in a minute. He remained that way a week. My father went to the boy’s mother and told her it wasn’t Robby at all that she saw; and when my father was for taking the tongs and burning the boy with a piece of glowing turf [as a changeling test], the boy screamed awfully. Then my father persuaded the mother to send a messenger to a doctor in the north near Ramsey “doing charms”, to see if she couldn’t get Robby back. As the messenger was returning, the mother stepped out of the house to relieve him, and when she went into the house again her own Robby was there. As soon as Robby came to himself all

right, he said a little woman and a little boy had followed him, and that just as he got home he was conscious of being taken away by them, but he didn't know where they came from nor where they took him. He was unable to tell more than this. Robby is alive yet, so far as I know; he is Robert Christian, of Douglas.'

## **Evidence from a Member of the House of Keys**

Mr. T. C. Kermode, of Peel, member of the House of Keys, the Lower House of the Manx Parliament, very kindly dictated for my use the following statement concerning fairies which he himself has seen:—

*Reality of Fairies.*—‘There is much belief here in the island that there actually are fairies; and I consider such belief based on an actual fact in nature, because of my own strange experience. About forty years ago, one October night, I and another young man were going to a kind of Manx harvest-home at Cronk-a-Voddy. On the Glen Helen road, just at the Beary Farm, as we walked along talking, my friend happened to look across the river (a small brook), and said: “Oh look, there are the fairies. Did you ever see them?” I looked across the river and saw a circle of supernatural light, which I have now come to regard as the “astral light” or the light of Nature, as it is called by mystics, and in which spirits become visible. The spot where the light appeared was a flat space surrounded on the sides away from the river by banks formed by low hills; and into this space and the circle of light, from the surrounding sides apparently, I saw come in twos and threes a great crowd of little beings smaller than Tom Thumb and his wife. All of them, who appeared like soldiers, were dressed in red. They moved back and forth amid the circle of light, as they formed into order like troops drilling. I advised getting nearer to them, but my friend said, “No, I’m going to the party.” Then after we had looked at them a few minutes my friend struck the roadside wall with a stick and shouted, and we lost the vision and the light vanished.’

*The Manx Fairy-Faith.*—‘I have much evidence from old Manx people, who are entirely reliable and God-fearing, that they have seen the fairies hunting with hounds and horses, and on the sea in ships, and under other conditions, and that they have heard their music. They consider the fairies a complete nation or world in themselves, distinct from our world, but having habits and instincts like ours. Social organization among them is said to be similar to that among men, and they have their soldiers and commanders.

Where the fairies actually exist the old people cannot tell, but they certainly believe that they can be seen here on earth.'

### **Testimony from a Past Provincial Grand Master**

Mr. J. H. Kelly, Past Provincial Grand Master of the Isle of Man District of Oddfellows, a resident of Douglas, offers the following account of a curious psychical experience of his own, and attributes it to fairies:—

*A Strange Experience with Fairies.*—'Twelve to thirteen years ago, on a clear moonlight night, about twelve o'clock, I left Laxey; and when about five miles from Douglas, at Ballagawne School, I heard talking, and was suddenly conscious of being in the midst of an invisible throng. As this strange feeling came over me, I saw coming up the road four figures as real to look upon as human beings, and of medium size, though I am certain they were not human. When these four, who seemed to be connected with the invisible throng, came out of the Garwick road into the main road, I passed into a by-road leading down to a very peaceful glen called Garwick Glen; and I still had the same feeling that invisible beings were with me, and this continued for a mile. There was no fear or emotion or excitement, but perfect calm on my part. I followed the by-road; and when I began to mount a hill there was a sudden and strange quietness, and a sense of isolation came over me, as though the joy and peace of my life had departed with the invisible throng. From different personal experiences like this one, I am firmly of the opinion and belief that the fairies exist. One cannot say that they are wholly physical or wholly spiritual, but the impression left upon my mind is that they are an absolutely real order of beings not human.'

Invoking Little Manannan, son of Leirr, to give us safe passage across his watery domain, we now go southward to the nearest Brythonic country, the Land of Arthur, Wales.

## V. IN WALES

Introduction by The Right Hon. Sir John Rhÿs, M.A., D.Litt., F.B.A., Hon. LL.D. of the University of Edinburgh; Professor of Celtic in the University of Oxford; Principal of Jesus College; author of *Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx*, &c.

The folk-lore of Wales in as far as it concerns the Fairies consists of a very few typical tales, such as:—

(1) The Fairy Dance and the usual entrapping of a youth, who dances with the Little People for a long time, while he supposes it only a few minutes, and who if not rescued is taken by them.

(2) There are other ways in which recruits may be led into Fairyland and induced to marry fairy maidens, and any one so led away is practically lost to his kith and kin, for even if he be allowed to visit them, the visit is mostly cut short in one way or another.

(3) A man catches a fairy woman and marries her. She proves to be an excellent housewife, but usually she has had put into the marriage-contract certain conditions which, if broken, inevitably release her from the union, and when so released she hurries away instantly, never to return, unless it be now and then to visit her children. One of the conditions, especially in North Wales, is that the husband should never touch her with iron. But in the story of the Lady of Llyn y Fan Fach, in Carmarthenshire, the condition is that he must not strike the wife without a cause three times, the striking being interpreted to include any slight tapping, say, on the shoulder. This story is one of the most remarkable on record in Wales, and it recalls the famous tale of Undine, published in German many years ago by De La Motte Fouqué. It is not known where he found it, or whether the people among whom it was current were pure Germans or of Celtic extraction.

(4) The Fairies were fond of stealing nice healthy babies and of leaving in their place their own sallow offspring. The stories of how the right child might be recovered take numerous forms; and some of these stories suggest

how weak and sickly children became the objects of systematic cruelty at the hands of even their own parents. The changeling was usually an old man, and many were the efforts made to get him to betray his identity.

(5) There is a widespread story of the fairy husband procuring for his wife the attendance of a human midwife. The latter was given a certain ointment to apply to the baby's eyes when she dressed it. She was not to touch either of her own eyes with it, but owing to an unfailing accident she does, and with the eye so touched she is enabled to see the fairies in their proper shape and form. This has consequences: The fairy husband pays the midwife well, and discharges her. She goes to a fair or market one day and observes her old master stealing goods from a stall, and makes herself known to him. He asks her with which eye she sees him. She tells him, and the eye to which he objects he instantly blinds.

(6) Many are the stories about the fairies coming into houses at night to wash and dress their children after everybody is gone to bed. A servant-maid who knows her business leaves a vessel full of water for them, and takes care that the house is neat and tidy, and she then probably finds in the morning some fairy gift left her, whereas if the house be untidy and the water dirty, they will pinch her in her sleep, and leave her black and blue.

(7) The fairies were not strong in their household arrangements, so it was not at all unusual for them to come to the farm-houses to borrow what was wanting to them.

In the neighbourhood of Snowdon the fairies were believed to live beneath the lakes, from which they sometimes came forth, especially on misty days, and children used to be warned not to stray away from their homes in that sort of weather, lest they should be kidnapped by them. These fairies were not Christians, and they were great thieves. They were fond of bright colours. They were sharp of hearing, and no word that reached the wind would escape them. If a fairy's proper name was discovered, the fairy to whom it belonged felt baffled.<sup>47</sup>

Some characteristics of the fairies seem to argue an ancient race, while other characteristics betray their origin in the workshop of the imagination; but generally speaking, the fairies are heterogeneous, consisting partly of

the divinities of glens and forests and mountains, and partly of an early race of men more or less caricatured and equipped by fable with impossible attributes.<sup>48</sup>

Jesus College, Oxford,

October 1910.

Our field of research in the Land of Arthur includes all the coast counties save Cardiganshire, from Anglesey on the north to Glamorganshire on the south. At the very beginning of our investigation of the belief in the *Tylwyth Teg*, or 'Fair Folk' in the Isle of Anglesey or Mona, the ancient stronghold of the Druids, we shall see clearly that the testimony offered by thoroughly reliable and prominent native witnesses is surprisingly uniform, and essentially animistic in its nature; and in passing southward to the end of Wales we shall find the Welsh Fairy-Faith with this same uniformity and exhibiting the same animistic background everywhere we go.

### **Testimony of an Anglesey Bard**

Mr. John Louis Jones, of Gaerwen, Anglesey, a native bard who has taken prizes in various Eisteddfods, testifies as follows:—

*Tylwyth Teg's Visits.*—'When I was a boy here on the island, the *Tylwyth Teg* were described as a race of little beings no larger than children six or seven years old, who visited farm-houses at night after all the family were abed. No matter how securely closed a house might be, the *Tylwyth Teg* had no trouble to get in. I remember how the old folk used to make the house comfortable and put fresh coals on the fire, saying, "Perhaps the *Tylwyth Teg* will come to-night." Then the *Tylwyth Teg*, when they did come, would look round the room and say, "What a clean beautiful place this is!" And all the while the old folk in bed were listening. Before departing from such a clean house the *Tylwyth Teg* always left a valuable present for the family.'

*Fairy Wife and Iron Taboo.*—'A young man once caught one of the *Tylwyth Teg* women, and she agreed to live with him on condition that he

should never touch her with iron. One day she went to a field with him to catch a horse, but in catching the horse he threw the bridle in such a way that the bit touched the *Tylwyth Teg* woman, and all at once she was gone. As this story indicates, the *Tylwyth Teg* could make themselves invisible. I think they could be seen by some people and not by other people. The old folk thought them a kind of spirit race from a spirit world.'

### **Evidence from Central Anglesey**

Owing to the very kindly assistance of Mr. E. H. Thomas, of Llangefni, who introduced me to the oldest inhabitants of his town, in their own homes and elsewhere, and then acted as interpreter whenever Welsh alone was spoken, I gleaned very clear evidence from that part of Central Anglesey. Seven witnesses, two of whom were women, ranging in age from seventy-two to eighty-nine years, were thus interviewed, and each of them stated that in their childhood the belief in the *Tylwyth Teg* as a non-human race of good little people—by one witness compared to singing angels—was general. Mr. John Jones, the oldest of the seven, among much else, said in Welsh:—'I believe personally that the *Tylwyth Teg* are still existing; but people can't see them. I have heard of two or three persons being together and one only having been able to see the *Tylwyth Teg*.'

### **Testimony from Two Anglesey Centenarians**

Perhaps nowhere else in Celtic lands could there be found as witnesses two sisters equal in age to Miss Mary Owen and Mrs. Betsy Thomas, in their hundred and third and hundredth year respectively (in 1909). They live a quiet life on their mountain-side farm overlooking the sea, in the beautiful country near Pentraeth, quite away from the rush and noise of the great world of commercial activity; and they speak only the tongue which their prehistoric Kimric ancestors spoke before Roman, or Saxon, or Norman



came to Britain. Mr. W. Jones, of Plas Tinon, their neighbour, who knows English and Welsh well, acted as interpreter. The elder sister testified first:

—

*‘Tylwyth Teg’s’ Nature.*—‘There were many of the *Tylwyth Teg* on the Llwydiarth Mountain above here, and round the Llwydiarth Lake where they used to dance; and whenever the prices at the Llangefni market were to be high they would chatter very much at night. They appeared only after dark; and all the good they ever did was singing and dancing. Ann Jones, whom I knew very well, used often to see the *Tylwyth Teg* dancing and singing, but if she then went up to them they would disappear. She told me they are an invisible people, and very small. Many others besides Ann Jones have seen the *Tylwyth Teg* in these mountains, and have heard their music and song. The ordinary opinion was that the *Tylwyth Teg* are a race of spirits. I believe in them as an invisible race of good little people.’

*Fairy Midwife and Magic Oil.*—‘The *Tylwyth Teg* had a kind of magic oil, and I remember this story about it:—A farmer went to Llangefni to fetch a woman to nurse his wife about to become a mother, and he found one of the *Tylwyth Teg*, who came with him on the back of his horse. Arrived at the farm-house, the fairy woman looked at the wife, and giving the farmer some oil told him to wash the baby in it as soon as it was born. Then the fairy woman disappeared. The farmer followed the advice, and what did he do in washing the baby but get some oil on one of his own eyes. Suddenly he could see the *Tylwyth Teg*, for the oil had given him the second-sight. Some time later the farmer was in Llangefni again, and saw the same fairy woman who had given him the oil. “How is your wife getting on?” she asked him. “She is getting on very well,” he replied. Then the fairy woman added, “Tell me with which eye you see me best.” “With this one,” he said, pointing to the eye he had rubbed with the oil. And the fairy woman put her stick in that eye, and the farmer never saw with it again.’<sup>49</sup>

*Seeing ‘Tylwyth Teg’.*—The younger sister’s testimony is as follows:—‘I saw one of the *Tylwyth Teg* about sixty years ago, near the Tynymyndd Farm, as I was passing by at night. He was like a little man. When I approached him he disappeared suddenly. I have heard about the dancing

and singing of the *Tylwyth Teg*, but never have heard the music myself. The old people said the *Tylwyth Teg* could appear and disappear when they liked; and I think as the old people did, that they are some sort of spirits.’

### **Testimony from an Anglesey Seeress**

At Pentraeth, Mr. Gwilyn Jones said to me:—‘It always was and still is the opinion that the *Tylwyth Teg* are a race of spirits. Some people think them small in size, but the one my mother saw was ordinary human size.’ At this, I immediately asked Mr. Jones if his mother was still living, and he replying that she was, gave me her address in Llanfair. So I went directly to interview Mr. Jones’s mother, Mrs. Catherine Jones, and this is the story about the one of the *Tylwyth Teg* she saw:—

‘*Tylwyth Teg*’ Apparition.—‘I was coming home at about half-past ten at night from Cemaes, on the path to Simdda Wen, where I was in service, when there appeared just before me a very pretty young lady of ordinary size. I had no fear, and when I came up to her put out my hand to touch her, but my hand and arm went right through her form. I could not understand this, and so tried to touch her repeatedly with the same result; there was no solid substance in the body, yet it remained beside me, and was as beautiful a young lady as I ever saw. When I reached the door of the house where I was to stop, she was still with me. Then I said “Good night” to her. No response being made, I asked, “Why do you not speak?” And at this she disappeared. Nothing happened afterwards, and I always put this beautiful young lady down as one of the *Tylwyth Teg*. There was much talk about my experience when I reported it, and the neighbours, like myself, thought I had seen one of the *Tylwyth Teg*. I was about twenty-four years old at the time of this incident.’<sup>50</sup>

### **Testimony from a Professor of Welsh**

Just before crossing the Menai Straits I had the good fortune to meet, at his home in Llanfair, Mr. J. Morris Jones, M.A. (Oxon.), Professor of Welsh in the University College at Bangor, and he, speaking of the fairy-belief in Anglesey as he remembers it from boyhood days, said:—

*'Tylwyth Teg.'*—‘In most of the tales I heard repeated when I was a boy, I am quite certain the implication was that the *Tylwyth Teg* were a kind of spirit race having human characteristics, who could at will suddenly appear and suddenly disappear. They were generally supposed to live underground, and to come forth on moonlight nights, dressed in gaudy colours (chiefly in red), to dance in circles in grassy fields. I cannot remember having heard changeling stories here in the Island: I think the *Tylwyth Teg* were generally looked upon as kind and good-natured, though revengeful if not well treated. And they were believed to have plenty of money at their command, which they could bestow on people whom they liked.’

### **Evidence from North Carnarvonshire**

Upon leaving Anglesey I undertook some investigation of the Welsh fairy-belief in the country between Bangor and Carnarvon. From the oldest Welsh people of Treborth I heard the same sort of folk-lore as we have recorded from Anglesey, except that prominence was given to a flourishing belief in *Bwganod*, goblins or bogies. But from Mr. T. T. Davis Evans, of Port Dinorwic, I heard the following very unusual story based on facts, as he recalled it first hand:—

*Jones's Vision.*—‘William Jones, who some sixty years ago declared he had seen the *Tylwyth Teg* in the Aberglaslyn Pass near Beddgelert, was publicly questioned about them in Bethel Chapel by Mr. Griffiths, the minister; and he explained before the congregation that the Lord had given him a special vision which enabled him to see the *Tylwyth Teg*, and that, therefore, he had seen them time after time as little men playing along the river in the Pass. The minister induced Jones to repeat the story many times,

because it seemed to please the congregation very much; and the folks present looked upon Jones's vision as a most wonderful thing.'

### **Evidence from South Carnarvonshire**

To Mr. E. D. Rowlands, head master of the schools at Afonwen, I am indebted for a summary of the fairy-belief in South Carnarvonshire:—

*'Tylwyth Teg.'*—'According to the belief in South Carnarvonshire, the *Tylwyth Teg* were a small, very pretty people always dressed in white, and much given to dancing and singing in rings where grass grew. As a rule, they were visible only at night; though in the day-time, if a mother while hay-making was so unwise as to leave her babe alone in the field, the *Tylwyth Teg* might take it and leave in its place a hunchback, or some deformed object like a child. At night, the *Tylwyth Teg* would entice travellers to join their dance and then play all sorts of tricks on them.'<sup>51</sup>

*Fairy Cows and Fairy Lake-Women.*—'Some of the *Tylwyth Teg* lived in caves; others of them lived in lake-bottoms. There is a lake called Llyn y Morwynion, or "Lake of the Maidens", near Festiniog, where, as the story goes, a farmer one morning found in his field a number of very fine cows such as he had never seen before. Not knowing where they came from, he kept them a long time, when, as it happened, he committed some dishonest act and, as a result, women of the *Tylwyth Teg* made their appearance in the pasture and, calling the cows by name, led the whole herd into the lake, and with them disappeared beneath its waters. The old people never could explain the nature of the *Tylwyth Teg*, but they always regarded them as a very mysterious race, and, according to this story of the cattle, as a supernatural race.'

### **Evidence from Merionethshire**

Mr. Louis Foster Edwards, of Harlech, recalling the memories of many years ago, offers the following evidence:—

*Scythe-Blades and Fairies.*—‘In an old inn on the other side of Harlech there was to be an entertainment, and, as usual on such occasions, the dancing would not cease until morning. I noticed, before the guests had all arrived, that the landlady was putting scythe-blades edge upwards up into the large chimney, and, wondering why it was, asked her. She told me that the fairies might come before the entertainment was over, and that if the blades were turned edge upwards it would prevent the fairies from troubling the party, for they would be unable to pass the blades without being cut.’

*‘Tylwyth Teg’ and their World.*—‘There was an idea that the *Tylwyth Teg* lived by plundering at night. It was thought, too, that if anything went wrong with cows or horses the *Tylwyth Teg* were to blame. As a race, the *Tylwyth Teg* were described as having the power of invisibility; and it was believed they could disappear like a spirit while one happened to be observing them. The world in which they lived was a world quite unlike ours, and mortals taken to it by them were changed in nature. The way a mortal might be taken by the *Tylwyth Teg* was by being attracted into their dance. If they thus took you away, it would be according to our time for twelve months, though to you the time would seem no more than a night.’

### **Fairy Tribes in Montgomeryshire**

From Mr. D. Davies-Williams, who outlined for me the Montgomeryshire belief in the *Tylwyth Teg* as he has known it intimately, I learned that this is essentially the same as elsewhere in North and Central Wales. He summed up the matter by saying:—

*Belief in Tylwyth Teg.*—‘It was the opinion that the *Tylwyth Teg* were a real race of invisible or spiritual beings living in an invisible world of their own. The belief in the *Tylwyth Teg* was quite general fifty or sixty years ago, and as sincere as any religious belief is now.’

Our next witness is the Rev. Josiah Jones, minister of the Congregational Church of Machynlleth; and, after a lifetime's experience in Montgomeryshire, he gives this testimony:—

*A Deacon's Vision.*—‘A deacon in my church, John Evans, declared that he had seen the *Tylwyth Teg* dancing in the day-time, within two miles from here, and he pointed out the very spot where they appeared. This was some twenty years ago. I think, however, that he saw only certain reflections and shadows, because it was a hot and brilliant day.’

*Folk-Beliefs in General.*—‘As I recall the belief, the old people considered the *Tylwyth Teg* as living beings halfway between something material and spiritual, who were rarely seen. When I was a boy there was very much said, too, about corpse-candles and phantom funerals, and especially about the *Bwganod*, plural of *Bwgan*, meaning a sprite, ghost, hobgoblin, or spectre. The *Bwganod* were supposed to appear at dusk, in various forms, animal and human; and grown-up people as well as children had great fear of them.’

*A Minister's Opinion.*—‘Ultimately there is a substance of truth in the fairy-belief, but it is wrongly accounted for in the folk-lore: I once asked Samuel Roberts, of Llanbryn-mair, who was quite a noted Welsh scholar, what he thought of the *Tylwyth Teg*, of hobgoblins, spirits, and so forth; and he said that he believed such things existed, and that God allowed them to appear in times of great ignorance to convince people of the existence of an invisible world.’

### **In Cardiganshire; and a Folk-lorist's Testimony**

No one of our witnesses from Central Wales is more intimately acquainted with the living folk-beliefs than Mr. J. Ceredig Davies, of Llanilar, a village about six miles from Aberystwyth; for Mr. Davies has spent many years in collecting folk-lore in Central and South Wales. He has interviewed the oldest and most intelligent of the old people, and while I write this he has in the press a work entitled *The Folk-Lore of Mid and West Wales*. Mr. Davies

very kindly gave me the following outline of the most prominent traits in the Welsh fairy-belief according to his own investigations:—

*'Tylwyth Teg.'*—‘The *Tylwyth Teg* were considered a very small people, fond of dancing, especially on moonlight nights. They often came to houses after the family were abed; and if milk was left for them, they would leave money in return; but if not treated kindly they were revengeful. The changeling idea was common: the mother coming home would find an ugly changeling in the cradle. Sometimes the mother would consult the *Dynion Hysbys*, or “Wise Men” as to how to get her babe back. As a rule, treating the fairy babe roughly and then throwing it into a river would cause the fairy who made the change to appear and restore the real child in return for the changeling.’

*'Tylwyth Teg' Marriage Contracts.*—‘Occasionally a young man would see the *Tylwyth Teg* dancing, and, being drawn into the dance, would be taken by them and married to one of their women. There is usually some condition in the marriage contract which becomes broken, and, as a result, the fairy wife disappears—usually into a lake. The marriage contract specifies either that the husband must never touch his fairy wife with iron, or else never beat or strike her three times. Sometimes when fairy wives thus disappear, they take with them into the lake their fairy cattle and all their household property.’

*'Tylwyth Teg' Habitations.*—‘The *Tylwyth Teg* were generally looked upon as an immortal race. In Cardiganshire they lived underground; in Carmarthenshire in lakes; and in Pembrokeshire along the sea-coast on enchanted islands amid the Irish Sea. I have heard of sailors upon seeing such islands trying to reach them; but when approached, the islands always disappeared. From a certain spot in Pembrokeshire, it is said that by standing on a turf taken from the yard of St. David’s Cathedral, one may see the enchanted islands.’<sup>52</sup>

*'Tylwyth Teg' as Spirits of Druids.*—‘By many of the old people the *Tylwyth Teg* were classed with spirits. They were not looked upon as mortal at all. Many of the Welsh looked upon the *Tylwyth Teg* or fairies as the

spirits of Druids dead before the time of Christ, who being too good to be cast into Hell were allowed to wander freely about on earth.'

### **Testimony from a Welshman Ninety-four Years Old**

At Pontrhydfendigaid, a village about two miles from the railway-station called Strata Florida, I had the good fortune to meet Mr. John Jones, ninety-four years old, yet of strong physique, and able to write his name without eye-glasses. Both Mr. J. H. Davies, Registrar of the University College of Aberystwyth, and Mr. J. Ceredig Davies, the eminent folk-lorist of Llanilar, referred me to Mr. John Jones as one of the most remarkable of living Welshmen who could tell about the olden times from first-hand knowledge. Mr. John Jones speaks very little English, and Mr. John Rees, of the Council School, acted as our interpreter. This is the testimony:—

*Pygmy-sized 'Tylwyth Teg'.*—'I was born and bred where there was tradition that the *Tylwyth Teg* lived in holes in the hills, and that none of these *Tylwyth Teg* was taller than three to four feet. It was a common idea that many of the *Tylwyth Teg*, forming in a ring, would dance and sing out on the mountain-sides, or on the plain, and that if children should meet with them at such a time they would lose their way and never get out of the ring. If the *Tylwyth Teg* fancied any particular child they would always keep that child, taking off its clothes and putting them on one of their own children, which was then left in its place. They took only boys, never girls.'

*Human-sized 'Tylwyth Teg'.*—'A special sort of *Tylwyth Teg* used to come out of lakes and dance, and their fine looks enticed young men to follow them back into the lakes, and there marry one of them. If the husband wished to leave the lake he had to go without his fairy wife. This sort of *Tylwyth Teg* were as big as ordinary people; and they were often seen riding out of the lakes and back again on horses.'

*'Tylwyth Teg' as Spirits of Prehistoric Race.*—'My grandfather told me that he was once in a certain field and heard singing in the air, and thought it spirits singing. Soon afterwards he and his brother in digging dikes in that



field dug into a big hole, which they entered and followed to the end. There they found a place full of human bones and urns, and naturally decided on account of the singing that the bones and urns were of the *Tylwyth Teg*.<sup>53</sup>

*A Boy's Visit to the 'Tylwyth Teg's' King.*—‘About eighty years ago, at Tynylone, my grandfather told me this story: “A boy ten years old was often whipped and cruelly treated by his schoolmaster because he could not say his lessons very well. So one day he ran away from school and went to a river-side, where some little folk came to him and asked why he was crying. He told them the master had punished him; and on hearing this they said, ‘Oh! if you will stay with us it will not be necessary for you to go to school. We will keep you as long as you like.’ Then they took him under the water and over the water into a cave underground, which opened into a great palace where the *Tylwyth Teg* were playing games with golden balls, in rings like those in which they dance and sing. The boy had been taken to the king’s family, and he began to play with the king’s sons. After he had been there in the palace in the full enjoyment of all its pleasures he wished very much to return to his mother and show her the golden ball which the *Tylwyth Teg* gave him. And so he took the ball in his pocket and hurried through the cave the way he had come; but at the end of it and by the river two of the *Tylwyth Teg* met him, and taking the ball away from him they pushed him into the water, and through the water he found his way home. He told his mother how he had been away for a fortnight, as he thought, but she told him it had been for two years. Though the boy often tried to find the way back to the *Tylwyth Teg* he never could. Finally, he went back to school, and became a most wonderful scholar and parson.”’<sup>54</sup>

### **In Merlin’s Country; and a Vicar’s Testimony**

The Rev. T. M. Morgan, vicar of Newchurch parish, two miles from Carmarthen, has made a very careful study of the folk-traditions in his own parish and in other regions of Carmarthenshire, and is able to offer us evidence of the highest value, as follows:—<sup>55</sup>

*'Tylwyth Teg' Power over Children.*—‘The *Tylwyth Teg* were thought to be able to take children. “You mind, or the *Tylwyth Teg* will take you away,” parents would say to keep their children in the house after dark. It was an opinion, too, that the *Tylwyth Teg* could transform good children into kings and queens, and bad children into wicked spirits, after such children had been *taken*—perhaps in death. The *Tylwyth Teg* were believed to live in some invisible world to which children on dying might go to be rewarded or punished, according to their behaviour on this earth. Even in this life the *Tylwyth Teg* had power over children for good or evil. The belief, as these ideas show, was that the *Tylwyth Teg* were spirits.’

*'Tylwyth Teg' as Evil Spirits.*—A few days after my return to Oxford, the Rev. T. M. Morgan, through his son, Mr. Basil I. Morgan, of Jesus College, placed in my hands additional folk-lore evidence from his own parish, as follows:—‘After Mr. Wentz visited me on Thursday, September 30, 1909, I went to see Mr. Shem Morgan, the occupier of Cwmcastellfach farm, an old man about seventy years old. He told me that in his childhood days a great dread of the fairies occupied the heart of every child. They were considered to be evil spirits who visited our world at night, and dangerous to come in contact with; there were no good spirits among them. He related to me three narratives touching the fairies’:—

*'Tylwyth Teg's' Path.*—The first narrative illustrates that the *Tylwyth Teg* have paths (precisely like those reserved for the Irish *good people* or for the Breton dead), and that it is death to a mortal while walking in one of these paths to meet the *Tylwyth Teg*.

*'Tylwyth Teg' Divination.*—The second narrative I quote:—‘A farmer of this neighbourhood having lost his cattle, went to consult *y dyn hysbys* (a diviner), in Cardiganshire, who was friendly with the fairies. Whenever the fairies visited the diviner they foretold future events, secrets, and the whereabouts of lost property. After the farmer reached the diviner’s house the diviner showed him the fairies, and then when the diviner had consulted them he told the farmer to go home as soon as he could and that he would find the cattle in such and such a place. The farmer did as he was directed, and found the cattle in the very place where the *dyn hysbys* told him they

would be.’ And the third narrative asserts that a man in the parish of Trelech who was fraudulently excluded by means of a false will from inheriting the estate of his deceased father, discovered the defrauder and recovered the estate, solely through having followed the advice given by the *Tylwyth Teg*, when (again as in the above account) they were called up as spirits by a *dyn hysbys*, a Mr. Harries, of Cwrt y Cadno, a place near Aberystwyth.<sup>56</sup>

### Testimony from a Justice of the Peace

Mr. David Williams, J.P., who is a member of the Cymmrodorion Society of Carmarthen, and who has sat on the judicial bench for ten years, offers us the very valuable evidence which follows:—

*‘Tylwyth Teg’ and their King and Queen.*—‘The general idea, as I remember it, was that the *Tylwyth Teg* were only visitors to this world, and had no terrestrial habitations. They were as small in stature as dwarfs, and always appeared in white. Often at night they danced in rings amid green fields. Most of them were females, though they had a king; and, as their name suggests, they were very beautiful in appearance. The king of the *Tylwyth Teg* was called *Gwydion ab Don*, *Gwyd* referring to a temperament in man’s nature. His residence was among the stars, and called *Caer Gwydion*. His queen was *Gwenhidw*. I have heard my mother call the small fleece-like clouds which appear in fine weather the *Sheep of Gwenhidw*.’<sup>57</sup>

*‘Tylwyth Teg’ as Aerial Beings.*—Mr. Williams’s testimony continues, and leads us directly to the Psychological or Psychical Theory:—‘As aerial beings the *Tylwyth Teg* could fly and move about in the air at will. They were a special order of creation. I never heard that they grew old; and whether they multiplied or not I cannot tell. In character they were almost always good.’

*Ghosts and Apparitions.*—Our conversation finally drifted towards ghosts and apparitions, as usual, and to Druids. In the chapter dealing with Re-birth (pp. 390–1) we shall record what Mr. Williams said about Druids,

and here what he said about ghosts and apparitions:—‘Sixty years ago there was hardly an individual who did not believe in apparitions; and in olden times Welsh families would collect round the fire at night and each in turn give a story about the *Tylwyth Teg* and ghosts.’

*Conferring Vision of a Phantom Funeral.*—‘There used to be an old man at Newchurch named David Davis (who lived about 1780–1840), of Abernant, noted for seeing phantom funerals. One appeared to him once when he was with a friend. “Do you see it? Do you see it?” the old man excitedly asked. “No,” said his friend. Then the old man placed his foot on his friend’s foot, and said, “Do you see it now?” And the friend replied that he did.’<sup>58</sup>

*Magic and Witchcraft.*—Finally, we shall hear from Mr. Williams about Welsh magic and witchcraft, which cannot scientifically be divorced from the belief in fairies and apparitions:—‘There used to be much witchcraft in this country; and it was fully believed that some men, if advanced scholars, had the power to injure or to bewitch their neighbours by magic. The more advanced the scholar the better he could carry on his craft.’

### **Additional Evidence from Carmarthenshire**

My friend, and fellow student at Jesus College, Mr. Percival V. Davies, of Carmarthen, contributes, as supplementary to what has been recorded above, the following evidence, from his great-aunt, Mrs. Spurrell, also of Carmarthen, a native Welshwoman who has seen a *canwyll gorff* (corpse-candle):—

*Bendith y Mamau.*—‘In the Carmarthenshire country, fairies (*Tylwyth Teg*) are often called *Bendith y Mamau*, the “Mothers’ Blessing.”’

*How Ten Children Became Fairies.*—‘Our Lord, in the days when He walked the earth, chanced one day to approach a cottage in which lived a woman with twenty children. Feeling ashamed of the size of her family, she hid half of them from the sight of her divine visitor. On His departure she

sought for the hidden children in vain; they had become fairies and had disappeared.’

### **In Pembrokeshire; at the Pentre Evan Cromlech**

Our Pembrokeshire witness is a maiden Welshwoman, sixty years old, who speaks no English, but a university graduate, her nephew, will act as our interpreter. She was born and has lived all her life within sight of the famous Pentre Evan Cromlech, in the home of her ancestors, which is so ancient that after six centuries of its known existence further record of it is lost. In spite of her sixty years, our witness is as active as many a city woman of forty or forty-five. Since her girlhood she has heard curious legends and stories, and, with a more than ordinary interest in the lore of her native country, has treasured them all in her clear and well-trained memory. The first night, while this well-stored memory of hers gave forth some of its treasures, we sat in her own home, I and my friend, her nephew, on one side in a chimney-seat, and she and her niece on the other side in another, exposed to the cheerful glow and warmth of the fire. When we had finished that first night it was two o’clock, and there had been no interruption to the even flow of marvels and pretty legends. A second night we spent likewise. What follows now is the result, so far as we are concerned with it:—

*Fairies and Spirits.*—‘Spirits and fairies exist all round us, invisible. Fairies have no solid bodily substance. Their forms are of matter like ghostly bodies, and on this account they cannot be caught. In the twilight they are often seen, and on moonlight nights in summer. Only certain people can see fairies, and such people hold communication with them and have dealings with them, but it is difficult to get them to talk about fairies. I think the spirits about us are the fallen angels, for when old Doctor Harris died his books on witchcraft had to be burned in order to free the place where he lived from evil spirits. The fairies, too, are sometimes called the fallen angels. They will do good to those who befriend them, and harm to

others. I think there must be an intermediate state between life on earth and heavenly life, and it may be in this that spirits and fairies live. There are two distinct types of spirits: one is good and the other is bad. I have heard of people going to the fairies and finding that years passed as days, but I do not believe in changelings, though there are stories enough about them. That there are fairies and other spirits like them, both good and bad, I firmly believe. My mother used to tell about seeing the “fair-folk” dancing in the fields near Cardigan; and other people have seen them round the cromlech up there on the hill (the Pentre Evan Cromlech). They appeared as little children in clothes like soldiers’ clothes, and with red caps, according to some accounts.’

*Death-Candles Described.*—‘I have seen more than one death-candle. I saw one death-candle right here in this room where we are sitting and talking.’ I was told by the nephew and niece of our present witness that this particular death-candle took an untrodden course from the house across the fields to the grave-yard, and that when the death of one of the family occurred soon afterwards, their aunt insisted that the corpse should be carried by exactly the same route; so the road was abandoned and the funeral went through the ploughed fields. Here is the description of the death-candle as the aunt gave it in response to our request:—‘The death-candle appears like a patch of bright light; and no matter how dark the room or place is, everything in it is as clear as day. The candle is not a flame, but a luminous mass, lightish blue in colour, which dances as though borne by an invisible agency, and sometimes it rolls over and over. If you go up to the light it is nothing, for it is a spirit. Near here a light as big as a pot was seen, and rays shot out from it in all directions. The man you saw here in the house to-day, one night as he was going along the road near Nevern, saw the death-light of old Dr. Harris, and says it was lightish green.’

*Gors Goch Fairies.*—Now we began to hear more about fairies:—‘One night there came a strange rapping at the door of the ancient manor on the Gors Goch farm over in Cardiganshire, and the father of the family asked what was wanted. Thin, silvery voices said they wanted a warm place in which to dress their children and to tidy them up. The door opened then,

and in came a dozen or more little beings, who at once set themselves to hunting for a basin and water, and to cleaning themselves. At daybreak they departed, leaving a pretty gift in return for the kindness. In this same house at another time, whether by the same party of little beings or by another could not be told, a healthy child of the family was *changed* because he was unbaptized, and a frightful-looking child left in his place. The mother finally died of grief, and the other children died because of the loss of their mother, and the father was left alone. Then some time after this, the same little folks who came the first time returned to clean up, and when they departed, in place of their former gifts of silver, left a gift of gold. It was not long before the father became heir to a rich farm in North Wales, and going to live on it became a magician, for the little people, still befriending him, revealed themselves in their true nature and taught him all their secrets.'

*Levi Salmon's Control of Spirits.*—'Levi Salmon, who lived about thirty years ago, between here and Newport, was a magician, and could call up good and bad spirits; but was afraid to call up the bad ones unless another person was with him, for it was a dangerous and terrible ordeal. After consulting certain books which he had, he would draw a circle on the floor, and in a little while spirits like bulls and serpents and other animals would appear in it, and all sorts of spirits would speak. It was not safe to go near them; and to control them Levi held a whip in his hand. He would never let them cross the circle. And when he wanted them to go away he always had to throw something to the chief spirit.'

*The Haunted Manor and the Golden Image.*—I offer now, in my own language, the following remarkable story:—The ancient manor-house on the Trewern Farm (less than a mile from the Pentre Evan Cromlech) had been haunted as long as anybody could remember. Strange noises were often heard in it, dishes would dance about of their own accord, and sometimes a lady dressed in silk appeared. Many attempts were made to lay the ghosts, but none succeeded. Finally things got so bad that nobody wanted to live there. About eighty years ago the sole occupants of the haunted house were Mr. —— and his two servants. At the time, it was well known in the neighbourhood that all at once Mr. —— became very wealthy,

and his servants seemed able to buy whatever they wanted. Everybody wondered, but no one could tell where the money came from; for at first he was a poor man, and he couldn't have made much off the farm. The secret only leaked out through one of the servants after Mr. ——was dead. The servant declared to certain friends that one of the ghosts, or, as he thought, the Devil, appeared to Mr. ——and told him there was an image of great value walled up in the room over the main entrance to the manor. A search was made, and, sure enough, a large image of solid gold was found in the very place indicated, built into a recess in the wall. Mr. ——bound the servants to secrecy, and began to turn the image into money. He would cut off small pieces of the image, one at a time, and take them to London and sell them. In this way he sold the whole image, and nobody was the wiser. After the image was found and disposed of, ghosts were no longer seen in the house, nor were unusual noises heard in it at night. The one thing which beyond all doubt is true is that when Mr. ——died he left his son an estate worth about £50,000 (an amount probably greatly in excess of the true one); and people have always wondered ever since where it came from, if not in part from the golden image.<sup>59</sup>

Hundreds of parallel stories in which, instead of ghosts, fairies and demons are said to have revealed hidden treasure could be cited.

### **In the Gower Peninsula, Glamorganshire**

Our investigations in Glamorganshire cover the most interesting part, the peninsula of Gower, where there are peculiar folk-lore conditions, due to its present population being by ancestry English and Flemish as well as Cornish and Welsh. Despite this race admixture, Brythonic beliefs have generally survived in Gower even among the non-Celts; and because of the Cornish element there are pixies, as shown by the following story related to me in Swansea by Mr. ——, a well-known mining engineer:—

*Pixies.*—‘At Newton, near the Mumbles (in Gower), an old woman, some twenty years ago, assured me that she had seen the pixies. Her



father's grey mare was standing in the trap before the house ready to take some produce to the Swansea market, and when the time for departure arrived the pixies had come, but no one save the old woman could see them. She described them to me as like tiny men dancing on the mare's back and climbing up along the mare's mane. She thought the pixies some kind of spirits who made their appearance in early morning; and all mishaps to cows she attributed to them.'

### **Testimony from an Archaeologist**

The Rev. John David Davis, rector of Llanmadoc and Cheriton parishes, and a member of the Cambrian Archaeological Society, has passed many years in studying the antiquities and folk-lore of Gower, being the author of various antiquarian works; and he is without doubt the oldest and best living authority to aid us. The Rector very willingly offers this testimony:—

*Pixies and 'Verry Volk'.*—'In this part of Gower, the name *Tylwyth Teg* is never used to describe fairies; *Verry Volk* is used instead. Some sixty years ago, as I can remember, there was belief in such fairies here in Gower, but now there is almost none. Belief in apparitions still exists to some extent. One may also hear of a person being pixy-led; the pixies may cause a traveller to lose his way at night if he crosses a field where they happen to be. To take your coat off and turn it inside out will break the pixy spell.<sup>60</sup> The *Verry Volk* were always little people dressed in scarlet and green; and they generally showed themselves dancing on moonlight nights. I never heard of their making changelings, though they had the power of doing good or evil acts, and it was a very risky thing to offend them. By nature they were benevolent.'

*A 'Verry Volk' Feast.*—'I heard the following story many years ago:—The tenant on the Eynonsford Farm here in Gower had a dream one night, and in it thought he heard soft sweet music and the patter of dancing feet. Waking up, he beheld his cow-shed, which opened off his bedroom, filled with a multitude of little beings, about one foot high, swarming all over his

fat ox, and they were preparing to slaughter the ox. He was so surprised that he could not move. In a short time the *Verry Volk* had killed, dressed, and eaten the animal. The feast being over, they collected the hide and bones, except one very small leg-bone which they could not find, placed them in position, then stretched the hide over them; and, as the farmer looked, the ox appeared as sound and fat as ever, but when he let it out to pasture in the morning he observed that it had a slight lameness in the leg lacking the missing bone.’<sup>61</sup>

### **Fairies Among Gower English Folk**

The population of the Llanmadoc region of Gower are generally English by ancestry and speech; and not until reaching Llanmorlais, beyond Llanridian, did I find anything like an original Celtic and Welsh-speaking people, and these may have come into that part within comparatively recent times; and yet, as the above place-names tend to prove, in early days all these regions must have been Welsh. It may be argued, however, that this English-speaking population may be more Celtic than Saxon, even though emigrants from England. In any case, we can see with interest how this so-called English population now echo Brythonic beliefs which they appear to have adopted in Gower, possibly sympathetically through race kinship; and the following testimony offered by Miss Sarah Jenkins, postmistress of Llanmadoc, will enable us to do so:—

*Dancing with Fairies.*—‘A man, whose Christian name was William, was enticed by the fairy folk to enter their dance, as he was on his way to the Swansea market in the early morning. They kept him dancing some time, and then said to him before they let him go, “Will dance well; the last going to market and the first that shall sell.” And though he arrived at the market very late, he was the first to sell anything.’

*Fairy Money.*—‘An old woman, whom I knew, used to find money left by the fairies every time they visited her house. For a long time she

observed their request, and told no one about the money; but at last she told, and so never found money afterwards.’

*Nature of Fairies.*—‘The fairies (*verry volk*) were believed to have plenty of music and dancing. Sometimes they appeared dressed in bright red. They could appear and disappear suddenly, and no one could tell how or where.’

## Conclusion

Much more might easily be said about Welsh goblins, about Welsh fairies who live in caves, or about Welsh fairy women who come out of lakes and rivers, or who are the presiding spirits of sacred wells and fountains,<sup>62</sup> but these will have some consideration later, in [Section III](#). For the purposes of the present inquiry enough evidence has been offered to show the fundamental character of Brythonic fairy-folk as we have found them. And we can very appropriately close this inquiry by allowing our Welsh-speaking witness from the Pentre Evan country, Pembrokeshire, to tell us one of the prettiest and most interesting fairy-tales in all Wales. The name of Taliessin appearing in it leads us to suspect that it may be the remnant of an ancient bardic tale which has been handed down orally for centuries. It will serve to illustrate the marked difference between the short conversational stories of the living Fairy-Faith and the longer, more polished ones of the traditional Fairy-Faith; and we shall see in it how a literary effect is gained at the expense of the real character of the fairies themselves, for it transforms them into mortals:—

*Einion and Olwen.*—‘My mother told the story as she used to sit by the fire in the twilight knitting stockings:—“One day when it was cloudy and misty, a shepherd boy going to the mountains lost his way and walked about for hours. At last he came to a hollow place surrounded by rushes where he saw a number of round rings. He recognized the place as one he had often heard of as dangerous for shepherds, because of the rings. He tried to get away from there, but he could not. Then an old, merry, blue-eyed man

appeared. The boy, thinking to find his way home, followed the old man, and the old man said to him, ‘Do not speak a word till I tell you.’ In a little while they came to a *menhir* (long stone). The old man tapped it three times, and then lifted it up. A narrow path with steps descending was revealed, and from it emerged a bluish-white light. ‘Follow me,’ said the old man, ‘no harm will come to you.’ The boy did so, and it was not long before he saw a fine, wooded, fertile country with a beautiful palace, and rivers and mountains. He reached the palace and was enchanted by the singing of birds. Music of all sorts was in the palace, but he saw no people. At meals dishes came and disappeared of their own accord. He could hear voices all about him, but saw no person except the old man—who said that now he could speak. When he tried to speak he found that he could not move his tongue. Soon an old lady with smiles came to him leading three beautiful maidens, and when the maidens saw the shepherd boy they smiled and spoke, but he could not reply. Then one of the girls kissed him; and all at once he began to converse freely and most wittily. In the full enjoyment of the marvellous country he lived with the maidens in the palace a day and a year, not thinking it more than a day, for there was no reckoning of time in that land. When the day and the year were up, a longing to see his old acquaintances came on him; and thanking the old man for his kindness, he asked if he could return home. The old man said to him, ‘Wait a little while’; and so he waited. The maiden who had kissed him was unwilling to have him go; but when he promised her to return, she sent him off loaded with riches.

“At home not one of his people or old friends knew him. Everybody believed that he had been killed by another shepherd. And this shepherd had been accused of the murder and had fled to America.

“On the first day of the new moon the boy remembered his promise, and returned to the other country; and there was great rejoicing in the beautiful palace when he arrived. Einion, for that was the boy’s name, and Olwen, for that was the girl’s name, now wanted to marry; but they had to go about it quietly and half secretly, for the *fair-folk* dislike ceremony and noise. When the marriage was over, Einion wished to go back with Olwen

to the upper world. So two snow-white ponies were given them, and they were allowed to depart.

““They reached the upper world safely; and, being possessed of unlimited wealth, lived most handsomely on a great estate which came into their possession. A son was born to them, and he was called Taliessin. People soon began to ask for Olwen’s pedigree, and as none was given it was taken for granted that she was one of the *fair-folk*. ‘Yes, indeed,’ said Einion, ‘there is no doubt that she is one of the *fair-folk*, there is no doubt that she is one of the very *fair-folk*, for she has two sisters as pretty as she is, and if you saw them all together you would admit that the name is a suitable one.’ And this is the origin of the term *fair-folk* (*Tylwyth Teg*).””

From Wales we go to the nearest Brythonic country, Cornwall, to study the fairy-folk there.

## VI. IN CORNWALL

Introduction by Henry Jenner, Member of the Gorsedd of the Bards of Brittany; Fellow and Local Secretary for Cornwall of the Society of Antiquaries; author of *A Handbook of the Cornish Language*, &c.

In Cornwall the legends of giants, of saints, or of Arthur and his knights, the observances and superstitions connected with the prehistoric stone monuments, holy wells, mines, and the like, the stories of submerged or buried cities, and the fragments of what would seem to be pre-Christian faiths, have no doubt occasional points of contact with Cornish fairy legends, but they do not help to explain the fairies very much. Yet certain it is that not only in Cornwall and other Celtic lands, but throughout most of the world, a belief in fairies exists or has existed, and so widespread a belief must have a reason for it, though not necessarily a good one. That which with unconscious humour men generally call ‘education’ has in these days caused those lower classes, to whom the deposit of this faith was entrusted,

to be ashamed of it, and to despise and endeavour to forget it. And so now in Cornwall, as elsewhere at that earlier outbreak of Philistinism, the Reformation,

From haunted spring and grassy ring

Troop goblin, elf and fairy,

And the kelpie must flit from the black bog-pit,

And the brownie must not tarry.

But, in spite of Protestantism, school-boards, and education committees, ‘pisky-pows’ are still placed on the ridge-tiles of West Cornish cottages, to propitiate the piskies and give them a dancing-place, lest they should turn the milk sour, and St. Just and Morvah folk are still ‘pisky-led’ on the Gump (*an Ûn Gumpas*, the Level Down, between Chûn Castle and Carn Kenidjack), and more rarely St. Columb and Roche folk on Goss Moor. It will not do to say that it is only another form of ‘whisky-led’. That is an evidently modern explanation, invented since the substitution of strange Scottish and Irish drinks for the good ‘Nantes’ and wholesome ‘Plymouth’ of old time, and it does not fit in with the phenomena. It was only last winter, in a cottage not a hundred yards from where I am writing, that milk was set at night for piskies, who had been knocking on walls and generally making nuisances of themselves. Apparently the piskies only drank the ‘astral’ part of the milk (whatever that may be) and then the neighbouring cats drank what was left, and it disagreed with them. I cannot vouch for the truth of the part about the piskies and the ‘astral’ milk—I give it as it was told to me by the occupant of the cottage, who was not unacquainted with ‘occult’ terminology—but I do know that the milk was consumed, and that the cats, one of which was my own, were with one accord unwell all over the place. But for the present purpose it does not matter whether these things really happened or not. The point is that people thought they happened.

Robert Hunt, in his *Popular Romances of the West of England*, divided the fairies of Cornish folk-lore into five classes: (1) the Small People; (2)

the Spriggans; (3) the Piskies; (4) the Buccas, Bockles, or Knockers; (5) the Brownies. This is an incorrect classification. The *Pobel Vean* or Small People, the Spriggans, and the Piskies are not really distinguishable from one another. Bucca, who properly is but one, is a deity not a fairy, and it is said that at Newlyn, the great seat of his worship, offerings of fish are still left on the beach for him. His name is the Welsh *pwca*, which is probably 'Puck', though Shakespeare's Puck was just a pisky, and it may be connected with the general Slavonic word *Bog*, God; so that if, as some say, *buccaboo* is really meant for *Bucca-du*, Black Bucca, this may be an equivalent of *Czernobog*, the Black God, who was the Ahriman of Slavonic dualism, and *Bucca-widn* (White Bucca), which is rarer, though the expression does come into a St. Levan story, may be the corresponding *Bielobog*. *Bockle*, which personally I have never heard used, suggests the Scottish *bogle*, and both may be diminutives of *bucca*, *bog*, *bogie*, or *bug*, the last in the sense in which one English version translates the *timor nocturnus* of Psalm XC. 5, not in that of *cimex lectularius*. But *bockle* and *brownie* are probably both foreign importations borrowed from books, though a 'brownie' *eo nomine* has been reported from Sennen within the last twenty years.

The Knockers or Knackers are mine-spirits, quite unconnected with Bucca or bogles. The story, as I have always heard it, is that they are the spirits of Jews who were sent by the Romans to work in the tin mines, some say for being concerned in the Crucifixion of our Lord, which sounds improbable. They are benevolent spirits, and warn miners of danger.

But the only true Cornish fairy is the Pisky, of the race which is the *Pobel Vean* or Little People, and the Spriggan is only one of his aspects. The Pisky would seem to be the 'Brownie' of the Lowland Scot, the *Duine Sith* of the Highlander, and, if we may judge from an interesting note in Scott's *The Pirate*, the 'Peght' of the Orkneys. If *Daoine Sith* really means 'The Folk of the Mounds' (barrows), not 'The People of Peace', it is possible that there is something in the theory that Brownie, *Duine Sith*, and 'Peght', which is Pict, are only in their origin ways of expressing the little dark-complexioned aboriginal folk who were supposed to inhabit the

barrows, cromlechs, and *allées couvertes*, and whose cunning, their only effective weapon against the mere strength of the Aryan invader, earned them a reputation for magical powers. Now *Pisky* or *Pisgy* is really *Pixy*. Though as a patriotic Cornishman I ought not to admit it, I cannot deny, especially as it suits my argument better, that the Devon form is the correct one. But after all there has been always a strong Cornish element in Devon, even since the time when Athelstan drove the Britons out of Exeter and set the Tamar for their boundary, and I think the original word is really Cornish. The transposition of consonants, especially when *s* is one of them, is not uncommon in modern Cornish English. *Hosged* for *hogshead*, and *haps* for *hasp* are well-known instances. If we take the root of *Pixy*, *Pix*, and divide the double letter *x* into its component parts, we get *Piks* or *Pics*, and if we remember that a final *s* or *z* in Cornish almost always represents a *t* or *d* of Welsh and Breton (cf. *tas* for *tad*, *nans* for *nant*, *bos* for *bod*), we may not unreasonably, though without absolute certainty, conjecture that *Pixy* is *Picty* in a Cornish form.<sup>63</sup>

Without begging any question concerning the origin, ethnology, or homogeneity of those who are called ‘Picts’ in history, from the times of Ammianus Marcellinus and Claudian until Kenneth MacAlpine united the Pictish kingdom with the Scottish, we can nevertheless accept the fact that the name ‘Pict’ has been popularly applied to some pre-Celtic race or races, to whom certain ancient structures, such as ‘vitrified forts’ and ‘Picts’ houses’ have been attributed. In Cornwall there are instances of prehistoric structures being called ‘Piskies’ Halls’ (there is an *allée couverte* so called at Bosahan in Constantine), and ‘Piskies’ Crows’ (*Crow* or *Craw*, Breton *Krao*, is a shed or hovel; ‘pegs’ *craw*’ is still used for ‘pig-sty’); and there are three genuine examples of what would in Scotland be called ‘Picts’ Houses’ just outside St. Ives in the direction of Zennor, though only modern antiquaries have applied that name to them. In the district in which they are, the fringe of coast from St. Ives round by Zennor, Morvah, Pendeen, and St. Just nearly to Sennen, are found to this day a strange and separate people of Mongol type, like the Bigaudens of Pont l’Abbé and Penmarc’h in the Breton Cornouailles, one of those ‘fragments of forgotten peoples’ of



the ‘sunset bound of Lyonesse’ of whom Tennyson tells. They are a little ‘stuggy’ dark folk, and until comparatively modern times were recognized as different from their Celtic neighbours, and were commonly believed to be largely wizards and witches. One of Mr. Wentz’s informants seems to attribute to Zennor a particularly virulent brand of pisky, and Zennor is the most primitive part of that district. Possibly the more completely unmixed ancestors of this race were ‘more so’ than the present representatives; but, be this as it may, if *Pixy* is really *Picty*, it would seem that, like the inhabitants of the extreme north of the British Isles, the south-western Britons eventually applied the fairly general popular name of the mysterious, half dreaded, half despised aboriginal to a race of preternatural beings in whose existence they believed, and, with the name, transferred some of the qualities, attributes, and legends, thus producing a mixed mental conception now known as ‘pisky’ or ‘pixy’.

There seems to have been always and everywhere (or nearly so) a belief in a race, neither divine nor human, but very like to human beings, who existed on a ‘plane’ different from that of humans, though occupying the same space. This has been called the ‘astral’ or the ‘fourth-dimensional’ plane. Why ‘astral’? why ‘fourth-dimensional’? why ‘plane’? are questions the answers to which do not matter, and I do not attempt to defend the terms, but you must call it something. This is the belief to which Scott refers in the introduction to *The Monastery*, as the ‘beautiful but almost forgotten theory of astral spirits or creatures of the elements, surpassing human beings in knowledge and power, but inferior to them as being subject, after a certain space of years, to a death which is to them annihilation’. The subdivisions and elaborations of the subject by Paracelsus, the Rosicrucians, and the modern theosophists are no doubt amplifications of that popular belief, which, though rather undefined, resembles the theory of these mystics in its main outlines, and was probably what suggested it to them.

These beings are held to be normally imperceptible to human senses, but conditions may arise in which the ‘astral plane’ of the elementals and that part of the ‘physical plane’ in which, if one may so express it, some

human being happens to be, may be in such a relation to one another that these and other spirits may be seen and heard. Some such condition is perhaps described in the story of Balaam the soothsayer, in that incident when 'the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha', and possibly also in the mysterious 'sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees' which David heard; but no doubt in these cases it was angels and not elementals. It may also be allowable to suggest, without irreverence, that the Gospel stories of the Transfiguration and Ascension are connected with the same idea, though the latter is expressed in the form of the geocentric theory of the universe.

The Cornish pisky stories are largely made up of instances of contact between the two 'planes', sometimes accidental, sometimes deliberately induced by incantations or magic eye-salve, yet with these stories are often mingled incidents that are not preternatural at all. How, when, and why this belief arose, I do not pretend even to conjecture; but there it is, and though of course the holders of it do not talk about 'planes', that is very much the notion which they appear to have.

I do not think that the piskies were ever definitely held to be the spirits of the dead, and while a certain confusion has arisen, as some of Mr. Wentz's informants show, I think it belongs to the confused eschatology of modern Protestants. To a pre-Reformation Cornishman, or indeed to any other Catholic, the idea was unthinkable. 'Justorum animae in manu Dei sunt, et non tangeat illos tormentum malitiae: visi sunt oculis insipientium mori: illi autem sunt in pace,' and the transmigration of the souls of the faithful departed into another order of beings, not disembodied because never embodied, was to them impossible. Such a notion is on a par with the quaint but very usual hope of the modern 'Evangelical' Christian, so beautifully expressed in one of Hans Andersen's stories, that his departed friends are promoted to be 'angels'. There may be, perhaps, an idea, as there certainly is in the Breton Death-Faith, that the spirits of the faithful dead are all round us, and are not rapt away into a *distant* Paradise or Purgatory. This may be of pre-Christian origin, but does not contradict any

article of the Christian faith. The warnings, apparitions, and hauntings, the 'calling of the dead' at sea, and other details of Cornish Death-Legends, seem to point to a conception of a 'plane' of the dead, similar to but not necessarily identical with that of the elementals. Under some quite undefined conditions contact may occur with the 'physical plane', whence the alleged incidents; but this Cornish Death-Faith, though sometimes, as commonly in Brittany, presenting similar phenomena, has in itself nothing to do with piskies, and as for the unfaithful departed, their destination was also well understood, and it was not Fairyland. There are possible connecting links in the not very common idea that piskies are the souls of unbaptized children, and in the more common notion that the *Pobel Vean* are, not the disembodied spirits, but the living souls and bodies of the old Pagans, who, refusing Christianity, are miraculously preserved alive, but are condemned to decrease in size until they vanish altogether. Some authorities hold that it is the race and not the individual which dwindles from generation to generation.

This last idea, as well as the name 'pixy', gives some probability to the conclusion that, as applied to Cornwall, Mr. MacRitchie's theory represents a part of the truth, and that on to an already existing belief in elementals have been grafted exaggerated traditions of a dark pre-Celtic people. These were not necessarily pygmies, but smaller than Celts, and may have survived for a long time in forests and hill countries, sometimes friendly to the taller race, whence come the stories of piskies working for farmers, sometimes hostile, which may account for the legends of changelings and other mischievous tricks. This is how it appears to one who knows his Cornwall in all its aspects fairly well, but does not profess to be an expert in folk-lore.

Bospowes, Hayle, Cornwall,
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July 1910.

Our investigation of the Fairy-Faith in Cornwall covers the region between Falmouth and the Land's End, which is now the most Celtic; and the

Tintagel country on the north coast. It is generally believed that ancient Cornish legends, like the Cornish language, are things of the past only, but I am now no longer of that opinion. Undoubtedly Cornwall is the most anglicized of all Celtic lands we are studying, and its folk-lore is therefore far from being as virile as the Irish folk-lore; nevertheless, through its people, racially mixed though they are, there still flows the blood and the inspiration of a prehistoric native ancestry, and among the oldest Cornish men and women of many an isolated village, or farm, there yet remains some belief in fairies and pixies. Moreover, throughout all of Old Cornwall there is a very living faith in the Legend of the Dead; and that this Cornish Legend of the Dead, with its peculiar Brythonic character, should be parallel as it is to the Breton Legend of the Dead, has heretofore, so far as I am aware, not been pointed out. I am giving, however, only a very few of the Cornish death-legends collected, because in essence most of them are alike.

### **A Cornish Historian's Testimony**

I was privileged to make my first call in rural Cornwall at the pretty country home of Miss Susan E. Gay, of Crill, about three miles from Falmouth; and Miss Gay, who has written a well-known history of Falmouth (*Old Falmouth*, London, 1903), very willingly accorded me an interview on the subject of my inquiry, and finally dictated for my use the following matter:

—*Pixies as 'Astral Plane' Beings.*—‘The pixies and fairies are little beings in the human form existing on the ‘astral plane’, who may be in the process of evolution; and, as such, I believe people have seen them. The ‘astral plane’ is not known to us now because our psychic faculty of perception has faded out by non-use, and this condition has been brought about by an almost exclusive development of the physical brain; but it is likely that the psychic faculty will develop again in its turn.’

*Psychical Interpretation of Folk-Lore.*—‘It is my point of view that there is a basis of truth in the folk-lore. With its remnants of occult learning,

magic, charms, and the like, folk-lore seems to be the remains of forgotten psychical facts, rather than history, as it is often called.'

### **Peasant Evidence from the Crill Country**

Miss Gay kindly gave me the names of certain peasants in the Crill region, and from one of them, Mrs. Harriett Christopher, I gleaned the following material:—

*A Pisky Changeling.*—‘A woman who lived near Breage Church had a fine girl baby, and she thought the piskies came and took it and put a withered child in its place. The withered child lived to be twenty years old, and was no larger when it died than when the piskies brought it. It was fretful and peevish and frightfully shrivelled. The parents believed that the piskies often used to come and look over a certain wall by the house to see the child. And I heard my grandmother say that the family once put the child out of doors at night to see if the piskies would take it back again.’

*Nature of Piskies.*—‘The piskies are said to be very small. You could never see them by day. I used to hear my grandmother, who has been dead fifty years, say that the piskies used to hold a fair in the fields near Breage, and that people saw them there dancing. I also remember her saying that it was customary to set out food for the piskies at night. My grandmother’s great belief was in piskies and in spirits; and she considered piskies spirits. She used to tell so many stories about spirits [of the dead] coming back and such things that I would be afraid to go to bed.’

### **Evidence from Constantine**

Our witnesses from the ancient and picturesque village of Constantine are John Wilmet, seventy-eight years old, and his good wife, two most excellent and well-preserved types of the passing generation of true Cornish stock. John began by telling me the following tale about an *allée couverte*—

a tale which in one version or another is apt to be told of most Cornish megaliths:—

*A Pisky-House.*—‘William Murphy, who married my sister, once went to the pisky-house at Bosahan with a surveyor, and the two of them heard such unearthly noises in it that they came running home in great excitement, saying they had heard the piskies.’

*The Pisky Thrasher.*—‘On a farm near here, a pisky used to come at night to thrash the farmer’s corn. The farmer in payment once put down a new suit for him. When the pisky came and saw it, he put it on, and said:—

Pisky fine and pisky gay,  
Pisky now will fly away.

And they say he never returned.’

*Nature of Piskies.*—‘I always understood the piskies to be little people. A great deal was said about ghosts in this place. Whether or not piskies are the same as ghosts I cannot tell, but I fancy the old folks thought they were.’

*Exorcism.*—‘A farmer who lived two miles from here, near the Gweek River, called Parson Jago to his house to have him quiet the ghosts or spirits regularly haunting it, for Parson Jago could always put such things to rest. The clergyman went to the farmer’s house, and with his whip formed a circle on the floor and then commanded the spirit, which made its appearance on the table, to come down into the circle. While on the table the spirit had been visible to all the family, but as soon as it got into the ring it disappeared; and the house was never haunted afterwards.’

### **At St. Michael’s Mount, Marazion**

Our next place for an investigation of the surviving Cornish Fairy-Faith is Marazion, the very ancient British town opposite the isle called St. Michael’s Mount. (From Constantine I walked through the country to this point, talking with as many old people as possible, but none of them

knew very much about ancient Cornish beliefs.) It is believed, though the matter is very doubtful, that Marazion was the chief mart for the tin trade of Celtic Britain, and that the Mount—sacred to the Sun and to the Pagan Mysteries long before Caesar crossed the Channel from Gaul—sheltered the brilliantly-coloured sailing-ships of the Phoenicians.<sup>64</sup> In such a romantic town, where Oriental merchants and Celtic pilgrims probably once mingled together, one might expect some survival of olden beliefs and customs.

*Piskies.*—To Mr. Thomas G. Jago, of Marazion, with a memory extending backwards more than seventy years, he being eighty years old, I am indebted for this statement about the pisky creed in that locality:—‘I imagine that one hundred and fifty years ago the belief in piskies and spirits was general. In my boyhood days, piskies were often called “the mites” (little people): they were regarded as little spirits. The word *piskies* is the old Cornish brogue for pixies. In certain grass fields, mushrooms growing in a circle might be seen of a morning, and the old folks pointing to the mushrooms would say to the children, “Oh, the piskies have been dancing there last night.”’

Two more of the oldest natives of Marazion, among others with whom I talked, are William Rowe, eighty-two years old, and his married sister seventy-eight years old. About the piskies Mr. Rowe said this:—‘People would go out at night and lose their way and then declare that they had been pisky-led. I think they meant by this that they fell under some spiritual influence—that some spirit led them astray. The piskies were said to be small, and they were thought of as spirits.’<sup>65</sup> Mr. Rowe’s sister added:—‘If we as children did anything wrong, the old folks would say to us, “The piskies will carry you away if you do that again.”’

*Witch-Doctors.*—I heard the following witch-story from a lawyer, a native of the district, who lives in the country just beyond Marazion:—‘Jimmy Thomas, of Wendron parish, who died within the last twenty-five years, was the last witch-doctor I know about in West Cornwall. He was supposed to have great power over evil spirits. His immediate predecessor was a woman, called the “Witch of Wendron”, and she did a big business. My father once visited her in company with a friend whose father had lost

some horses. This was about seventy to eighty years ago. The witch when consulted on this occasion turned her back to my father's companion, and began talking to herself in Cornish. Then she gave him some herbs. His father used the herbs, and no more horses died: the herbs were supposed to have driven all evil spirits out of the stable.'

### **In Penzance: An Architect's Testimony**

Penzance from earliest times has undoubtedly been, as it is now, the capital of the Land's End district, the Sacred Land of Britain. And in Penzance I had the good fortune to meet those among its leading citizens who still cherish and keep alive the poetry and the mystic lore of Old Cornwall; and to no one of them am I more indebted than to Mr. Henry Maddern, F.I.A.S. Mr. Maddern tells me that he was initiated into the mysteries of the Cornish folk-lore of this region when a boy in Newlyn, where he was born, by his old nurse Betty Grancan, a native Zennor woman, of stock probably the most primitive and pure in the British Islands. At his home in Penzance, Mr. Maddern dictated to me the very valuable evidence which follows:—

*Two Kinds of Pixies.*—'In this region there are two kinds of pixies, one purely a land-dwelling pixy and the other a pixy which dwells on the sea-strand between high and low water mark.<sup>66</sup> The land-dwelling pixy was usually thought to be full of mischievous fun, but it did no harm. There was a very prevalent belief, when I was a boy, that this sea-strand pixy, called *Bucca*,<sup>67</sup> had to be propitiated by a *cast* (three) of fish, to ensure the fishermen having a good *shot* (catch) of fish. The land pixy was supposed to be able to render its devotees invisible, if they only anointed their eyes with a certain green salve made of secret herbs gathered from Kerris-moor.<sup>68</sup> In the invisible condition thus induced, people were able to join the pixy revels, during which, according to the old tradition, time slipped away very, very rapidly, though people returned from the pixies no older than when they went with them.'



*The Nurse and the Ointment.*—‘I used to hear about a Zennor girl who came to Newlyn as nurse to the child of a gentleman living at Zimmerman-Cot. The gentleman warned her never to touch a box of ointment which he guarded in a special room, nor even to enter that room; but one day in his absence she entered the room and took some of the ointment. Suspecting the qualities of the ointment, she put it on her eyes with the wish that she might see where her master was. She immediately found herself in the higher part of the orchard amongst the pixies, where they were having much *junketing* (festivity and dancing); and there saw the gentleman whose child she had nursed. For a time she managed to evade him, but before the *junketing* was at an end he discovered her and requested her to go home; and then, to her intense astonishment, she learned that she had been away twenty years, though she was unchanged. The gentleman scolded her for having touched the ointment, paid her wages in full, and sent her back to her people. She always had the one regret, that she had not gone into the forbidden room at first.’

*The Tolcarne Troll.*—‘The fairy of the Newlyn Tolcarne<sup>69</sup> was in some ways like the Puck of the English Midlands. But this fairy, or troll, was supposed to date back to the time of the Phoenicians. He was described as a little old pleasant-faced man dressed in a tight-fitting leathern jerkin, with a hood on his head, who lived invisible in the rock. Whenever he chose to do so he could make himself visible. When I was a boy it was said that he spent his time voyaging from here to Tyre on the galleys which carried the tin; and, also, that he assisted in the building of Solomon’s Temple. Sometimes he was called “the Wandering One”, or “Odin the Wanderer”. My old nurse, Betty Grancan, used to say that you could call up the troll at the Tolcarne if while there you held in your hand three dried leaves, one of the ash, one of the oak, and one of the thorn, and pronounced an incantation or charm. Betty would never tell me the words of the charm, because she said I was too much of a sceptic. The words of such a Cornish charm had to pass from one believer to another, through a woman to a man, and from a man to a woman, and thus alternately.’<sup>70</sup>

*Nature of Pixies.*—‘Pixies were often supposed to be the souls of the prehistoric dwellers of this country. As such, pixies were supposed to be getting smaller and smaller, until finally they are to vanish entirely. The country pixies inhabiting the highlands from above Newlyn on to St. Just were considered a wicked sort. Their great ambition was to change their own offspring for human children; and the true child could only be got back by laying a four-leaf clover on the changeling. A *winickey* child—one which was weak, frail, and peevish—was of the nature of a changeling. Miner pixies, called “knockers”, would accept a portion of a miner’s *croust* (lunch) on good faith, and by knocking lead him to a rich mother-lode, or warn him by knocking if there was danger ahead or a cavern full of water; but if the miner begrudged them the *croust*, he would be left to his own resources to find the lode, and, moreover, the “knockers” would do all they could to lead him away from a good lode. These mine pixies, too, were supposed to be spirits, sometimes spirits of the miners of ancient times.’<sup>71</sup>

*Fairies and Pixies.*—‘In general appearance the fairies were much the same as pixies. They were small men and women, much smaller than dwarfs. The men were swarthy in complexion, and the women had a clear complexion of a peach-like bloom. None ever appeared to be more than five-and-twenty to thirty years old. I have heard my nurse say that she could see scores of them whenever she picked a four-leaf clover and put it in the wisp of straw which she carried on her head as a cushion for the bucket of milk. Her theory was that the richness of the milk was what attracted them. Pixies, like fairies, very much enjoyed milk, and people of miserly nature used to put salt around a cow to keep the pixies away; and then the pixies would lead such mean people astray the very first opportunity that came. According to some country-people, the pixies have been seen in the day-time, but usually they are only seen at night.’

### **A Cornish Editor’s Opinion**

Mr. Herbert Thomas, editor of four Cornish papers, *The Cornishman*, *The Cornish Telegraph*, *Post*, and *Evening Times*, and a true Celt himself, has been deeply interested in the folk-lore of Cornwall, and has made excellent use of it in his poetry and other literary productions; so that his personal opinions, which follow, as to the probable origin of the fairy-belief, are for our study a very important contribution:—

*Animistic Origin of Belief in Pixies.*—‘I should say that the modern belief in pixies, or in fairies, arose from a very ancient Celtic or pre-Celtic belief in spirits. Just as among some savage tribes there is belief in gods and totems, here there was belief in little spirits good and bad, who were able to help or to hinder man. Belief in the supernatural, in my opinion, is the root of it all.’

### **A Cornish Folk-lorist’s Testimony**

In Penzance I had the privilege of also meeting Miss M. A. Courtney, the well-known folk-lorist, who quite agrees with me in believing that there is in Cornwall a widespread Legend of the Dead; and she cited a few special instances in illustration, as follows:—

*Cornish Legend of the Dead.*—‘Here amongst the fishermen and sailors there is a belief that the dead in the sea will be heard calling if a drowning is about to occur. I know of a woman who went to a clergyman to have him exorcize her of the spirit of her dead sister, which she said appeared in the form of a bee. And I have heard of miners believing that white moths are spirits.’<sup>72</sup>

### **Evidence from Newlyn**

In Newlyn, Mrs. Jane Tregurtha gave the following important testimony:—

*The ‘Little Folk’.*—‘The old people thoroughly believed in the *little folk*, and that they gambolled all over the moors on moonlight nights. Some

pixies would rain down blessings and others curses; and to remove the curses people would go to the wells blessed by the saints. Whenever anything went wrong in the kitchen at night the pixies were blamed. After the 31st of October [or after Halloween] the blackberries are not fit to eat, for the pixies have then been over them' (cf. the parallel Irish belief, p. 38).

*Fairy Guardian of the Men-an-Tol.*<sup>73</sup>—'At the Men-an-Tol there is supposed to be a guardian fairy or pixy who can make miraculous cures. And my mother knew of an actual case in which a changeling was put through the stone in order to get the real child back. It seems that evil pixies changed children, and that the pixy at the Men-an-Tol being good, could, in opposition, undo their work.'

*Exorcism.*—'A spirit was put to rest on the Green here in Newlyn. The parson prayed and fasted, and then commanded the spirit to *teeme* (dip dry) the sea with a limpet shell containing no bottom; and the spirit is supposed to be still busy at this task.'

*Piskies as Apparitions.*—When I talked with her in her neat cottage at Newlyn, Miss Mary Ann Chirgwin (who was born on St. Michael's Mount in 1825) told me this:—'The old people used to say the piskies were apparitions of the dead come back in the form of little people, but I can't remember anything more than this about them.'

## **An Artist's Testimony**

One of the members of the Newlyn Art School was able to offer a few of his own impressions concerning the pixies of Devonshire, where he has frequently made sketches of pixies from descriptions given to him by peasants:—

*Devonshire Pixies.*—'Throughout all the west of Devonshire, anywhere near the moorlands, the country people are much given to belief in pixies and ghosts. I think they expect to see them about the twilight hour; though I have not found anybody who has actually seen a pixy—the belief now is largely based on hearsay.'

## Testimony from the Historian of Mousehole

To Mr. Richard Harry, the historian of Mousehole, I am indebted for these remarks about the nature and present state of the belief in pixies as he observes it in that region:—

*The Pixy Belief.*—‘The piskies, thought of as little people who appear on moonlight nights, are still somewhat believed in here. If interfered with too much they are said to exhibit almost fiendish powers. In a certain sense they are considered spiritual, but in another sense they are much materialized in the conceptions of the people. Generally speaking, the belief in them has almost died out within the last fifty years.’

## A Seaman’s Testimony

‘Uncle Billy Pender,’ as our present witness is familiarly called, is one of the oldest natives of Mousehole, being eighty-five years old; and most of his life has been passed on the ocean, as a fisherman, seaman, and pilot. After having told me the usual things about piskies, fairies, spirits, ghosts, and the devil, Uncle Billy Pender was very soon talking about the dead:—

*Cornish Legend of the Dead.*—‘I was up in bed, and I suppose asleep, and I dreamt that the boy James came to my bedside and woke me up by saying, “How many lights does Death put up?” And in the dream there appeared such light as I never saw in my life; and when I woke up another light like it was in the room. Within three months afterwards we buried two grand-daughters out of this house. This was four years ago.’ When this strange tale was finished, Uncle Billy Pender’s daughter, who had been listening, added:—‘For three mornings, one after another, there was a robin at our cellar door before the deaths, and my husband said he didn’t like that.’

Then Uncle Billy told this weird Breton-like tale:—“Granny” told about a boat named *Blücher*, going from Newlyn to Bristol with six thousand mackerel, which put in at Arbor Cove, close to Padstow, on account of bad weather. The boat dragged her anchors and was lost. “Granny” afterwards declared that he saw the crew going up over the Newlyn Slip; and the whole of Newlyn and Mousehole believed him.’

### **Testimony by Two Land’s End Farmers**

In the Sennen country, within a mile of the end of Britain, I talked with two farmers who knew something about piskies. The first one, Charles Hutchen, of Trevescan, told me this legend:—

*A St. Just Pisky.*—‘Near St. Just, on Christmas Day, a pisky carried away in his cloak a boy, but the boy got home. Then the pisky took him a second time, and again the boy got home. Each time the boy was away for only an hour’ (probably in a dream or trance state).

*Seeing the Pisky-Dance.*—Frank Ellis, seventy-eight years old, of the same village of Trevescan, then gave the following evidence:—‘Up on Sea-View Green there are two rings where the piskies used to dance and play music on a moonlight night. I’ve heard that they would come there from the moors. *Little people* they are called. If you keep quiet when they are dancing you’ll see them, but if you make any noise they’ll disappear.’ Frank Ellis’s wife, who is a very aged woman, was in the house listening to the conversation, and added at this point:—‘My grandmother, Nancy Maddern, was down on Sea-View Green by moonlight and saw the piskies dancing, and passed near them. She said they were like little children, and had red cloaks.’

## Testimony from a Sennen Cove Fisherman

John Gilbert Guy, seventy-eight years old, a retired fisherman of Sennen Cove, offers very valuable testimony, as follows:—

*'Small People'*.—‘Many say they have seen the *small people* here by the hundreds. In Ireland they call the *small people* the fairies. My mother believes there were such things, and so did the old folks in these parts. My grandmother used to put down a good furze fire for *them* on stormy nights, because, as she said, “*They* are a sort of people wandering about the world with no home or habitation, and ought to be given a little comfort.” The most fear of *them* was that they might come at night and change a baby for one that was no good. My mother said that Joan Nicholas believed the fairies had changed her baby, because it was very small and cross-tempered. Up on the hill you’ll see a round ring with grass greener than anywhere else, and that is where the *small people* used to dance.’

*Danger of Seeing the ‘Little People’*.—‘I heard that a woman set out water to wash her baby in, and that before she had used the water the *small people* came and washed their babies in it. She didn’t know about this, and so in washing her baby got some of the water in her eyes, and then all at once she could see crowds of *little people* about her. One of them came to her and asked if she was able to see their crowd, and when she said “Yes,” the *little people* wanted to take her eyes out, and she had to clear away from them as fast as she could.’

## Testimony from a Cornish Miner

William Shepherd, a retired miner of Pendeen, near St. Just, where he has passed all his life, offers us from his own experiences under the earth the evidence which follows:—

*Mine Piskies*.—‘There are mine-piskies which are not the “knockers”. I’ve heard old men in the mines say that they have seen them, and they call

them the *small people*. It appears that they don't like company, for they are always seen singly. The "knockers" are spirits, too, as one might say. They are said to bring bad luck, while the *small people* may bring good luck.'

### **Testimony from King Arthur's Country**

Leaving the Land's End district and South Cornwall, we now pass northward to King Arthur's country. Our chief researches there are to be made outside the beaten track of tourists as far as possible, in the country between Camelford and Tintagel. At Delabole, the centre of this district, we find our first witness, Henry Spragg, a retired slate-quarryman, seventy years old. Mr. Spragg has had excellent opportunities of hearing any folklore that might have been living during his lifetime; and what he offers first is about King Arthur:—

*King Arthur*.—'We always thought of King Arthur as a great warrior. And many a time I've heard old people say that he used to appear in this country in the form of a nath.'<sup>74</sup> This was all that could be told of King Arthur; and the conversation finally was directed toward piskies, with the following results:—

*Piskies*.—'A man named Bottrell, who lived near St. Teath, was piskyled at West Down, and when he turned his pockets inside out he heard the piskies going away laughing.'<sup>75</sup> Often my grandmother used to say when I got home after dark, "You had better mind, or the piskies will carry you away." And I can remember hearing the old people say that the piskies are the spirits of dead-born children.' From pixies the conversation drifted to the spirit-hounds 'often heard at night near certain haunted downs in St. Teath parish', and then, finally, to ordinary Cornish legends about the dead.

Our next witnesses from Delabole are John Male, eighty-two years old, one of the very oldest men in King Arthur's country, and his wife; and all of Mr. Male's ancestors as far back as he can trace them have lived in the same parish.



*Piskies in General.*—Mr. Male remarked:—‘I have heard a good deal about the piskies, but I can’t remember any of the old women’s tales. I have heard, too, of people saying that they had seen the piskies. It was thought that when the piskies have misled you they show themselves jumping about in front of you; they are a race of little people who live out in the fields.’ Mrs. Male had now joined us at the open fire, and added:—‘Piskies always come at night, and in marshy ground there are round places called pisky beds where they play. When I was little, my mother and grandmother would be sitting round the fire of an evening telling fireside stories, and I can remember hearing about a pisky of this part who stole a new coat, and how the family heard him talking to himself about it, and then finally say:—

Pisky fine and pisky gay,  
Pisky’s got a bright new coat,  
Pisky now will run away.

And I can just remember one bit of another story: A pisky looked into a house and said:—

All alone, fair maid?  
No, here am I with a dog and cat,  
And apples to eat and nuts to crack.’

*Tintagel Folk-Beliefs.*—A retired rural policeman of the Tintagel country, where he was born and reared, and now keeper of the Passmore Edwards Art Gallery at Newlyn, offered this testimony from Tintagel:—‘In Tintagel I used to sit round the fire at night and hear old women tell so much about piskies and ghosts that I was then afraid to go out of doors after darkness had fallen. They religiously believed in such things, and when I expressed my doubts I was driven away as a rude boy. They thought if you went to a certain place at a certain hour of the night that you could there see the piskies as little spirits. It was held that the piskies could lead you astray and play tricks on you, but that they never did you any serious injury.’ Of the Arthurian folk-legend at Tintagel he said:—‘The spirit of King Arthur is

supposed to be in the Cornish chough—a beautiful black bird with red legs and red beak.’

We now leave Great Britain and cross the English Channel to Little Britain, the third of the Brythonic countries.

## VII. IN BRITTANY

Introduction by Anatole le Braz, Professor of French Literature, University of Rennes, Brittany; author of *La Légende de la Mort, Au Pays des Pardons, &c.*

### English Translation of Introduction

Mon cher Monsieur Wentz,

Il me souvient que, lors de votre soutenance de thèse devant la Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Rennes, un de mes collègues, mon ami, le professeur Dottin, vous demanda:

‘Vous croyez, dites-vous, à l’existence des fées? En avez-vous vu?’

Vous répondîtes, avec autant de phlegme que de sincérité:

‘Non. J’ai tout fait pour en voir, et je n’en ai jamais vu. Mais il y a beaucoup de choses que vous n’avez pas vues, monsieur le professeur, et dont vous ne songeriez cependant pas à nier l’existence. Ainsi fais-je à l’égard des fées.’

Je suis comme vous, mon cher monsieur Wentz: je n’ai jamais vu de fées. J’ai bien une amie très chère que nous avons baptisée de ce nom, mais, malgré tous ses beaux dons magiques, elle n’est qu’une humble mortelle. En revanche, j’ai vécu, tout enfant, parmi des personnes qui avaient avec les fées véritables un commerce quasi journalier.

C’était dans une petite bourgade de Basse-Bretagne, peuplée de paysans à moitié marins, et de marins à moitié paysans. Il y avait, non loin du village, une ancienne gentilhommière que ses propriétaires avaient depuis longtemps abandonnée pour on ne savait au juste quel motif. On continuait

de l'appeler le 'château' de Lanascol, quoiqu'elle ne fût plus guère qu'une ruine. Il est vrai que les avenues par lesquelles on y accédait avaient conservé leur aspect seigneurial, avec leurs quadruples rangées de vieux hêtres dont les vastes frondaisons se miraient dans de magnifiques étangs. Les gens d'alentour se risquaient peu, le soir, dans ces avenues. Elles passaient pour être, à partir du coucher du soleil, le lieu de promenade favori d'une 'dame' que l'on désignait sous le nom de *Groac'h Lanascol*—la 'Feé de Lanascol'.

Beaucoup disaient l'avoir rencontrée, et la dépeignaient sous les couleurs, du reste, les plus diverses. Ceux-ci faisaient d'elle une vieille femme, marchant toute courbée, les deux mains appuyées sur un tronçon de béquille avec lequel, de temps en temps, elle remuait, à l'automne, les feuilles mortes. Les feuilles mortes qu'elle retournait ainsi devenaient soudain brillantes comme de l'or et s'entrechoquaient avec un bruit clair de métal. Selon d'autres, c'était une jeune princesse, merveilleusement parée, sur les pas de qui s'empressaient d'étranges petits hommes noirs et silencieux. Elle s'avancait d'une majestueuse allure de reine. Parfois elle s'arrêtait devant un arbre, et l'arbre aussitôt s'inclinait comme pour recevoir ses ordres. Ou bien, elle jetait un regard sur l'eau d'un étang, et l'étang frissonnait jusqu'en ses profondeurs, comme agité d'un mouvement de crainte sous la puissance de son regard.

On racontait sur elle cette curieuse histoire:—

Les propriétaires de Lanascol ayant voulu se défaire d'un domaine qu'ils n'habitaient plus, le manoir et les terres qui en dépendaient furent mis en adjudication chez un notaire de Plouaret. Au jour fixé pour les enchères nombre d'acheteurs accoururent. Les prix étaient déjà montés très haut, et le domaine allait être adjugé, quand, à un dernier appel du crieur, une voix féminine, très douce et très impérieuse tout ensemble, s'éleva et dit:

'Mille francs de plus!'

Il y eut grande rumeur dans la salle. Tout le monde chercha des yeux la personne qui avait lancé cette surenchère, et qui ne pouvait être qu'une femme. Mais il ne se trouva pas une seule femme dans l'assistance. Le notaire demanda:

‘Qui a parlé?’

De nouveau, la même voix se fit entendre.

‘Groac’h Lanascol!’ répondit-elle.

Ce fut une débandade générale. Depuis lors, il ne s’était jamais présenté d’acquéreur, et voilà pourquoi, répétait-on couramment, Lanascol était toujours à vendre.

Si je vous ai entretenu à plaisir de la Fée de Lanascol, mon cher monsieur Wentz, c’est qu’elle est la première qui ait fait impression sur moi, dans mon enfance. Combien d’autres n’en ai-je pas connu, par la suite, à travers les récits de mes compatriotes des grèves, des champs ou des bois! La Bretagne est restée un royaume de féerie. On n’y peut voyager l’espace d’une lieue sans côtoyer la demeure de quelque fée mâle ou femelle. Ces jours derniers, comme j’accomplissais un pèlerinage d’automne à l’hallucinante forêt de Paimpont, toute hantée encore des grands souvenirs de la légende celtique, je croisai, sous les opulents ombrages du Pas-du-Houx, une ramasseuse de bois mort, avec qui je ne manquai pas, vous pensez bien, de lier conversation. Un des premiers noms que je prononçai fut naturellement celui de Viviane.

‘Viviane!’ se récria la vieille pauvre. ‘Ah! bénie soit-elle, la bonne Dame! car elle est aussi bonne que belle.... Sans sa protection, mon homme, qui travaille dans les coupes, serait tombé, comme un loup, sous les fusils des gardes....’ Et elle se mit à me conter comme quoi son mari, un tantinet braconnier comme tous les bûcherons de ces parages, s’étant porté, une nuit, à l’affût du chevreuil, dans les environs de la Butte-aux-Plaintes, avait été surpris en flagrant délit par une tournée de gardes. Il voulut fuir: les gardes tirèrent. Une balle l’atteignit à la cuisse: il tomba, et il s’apprêtait à se faire tuer sur place, plutôt que de se rendre, lorsque, entre ses agresseurs et lui, s’interposa subitement une espèce de brouillard très dense qui voila tout—le sol, les arbres, les gardes et le blessé lui-même. Et il entendit une voix sortie du brouillard, une voix légère comme un bruit de feuilles, murmurer à son oreille: ‘Sauve-toi, mon fils: l’esprit de Viviane veillera sur toi jusqu’à ce que tu aies rampé hors de la forêt.’

‘Telles furent les propres paroles de la fée,’ conclut la ramasseuse de bois mort.

Et, dévotement, elle se signa, car la religieuse Bretagne—vous le savez—vénère les fées à l’égal des saintes.

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J’ignore s’il faut rattacher les lutins au monde des fées, mais, ce qui est sûr, c’est que cette charmante et malicieuse engeance a toujours pullulé dans notre pays. Je me suis laissé dire qu’autrefois chaque maison avait le sien. C’était quelque chose comme le petit dieu pénate. Tantôt visible, tantôt invisible, il présidait à tous les actes de la vie domestique. Mieux encore: il y participait, et de la façon la plus efficace. A l’intérieur du logis, il aidait les servantes, soufflait le feu dans l’âtre, surveillait la cuisson de la nourriture pour les hommes ou pour les bêtes, apaisait les cris de l’enfant couché dans le bas de l’armoire, empêchait les vers de se mettre dans les pièces de lard suspendues aux solives. Il avait pareillement dans son lot le gouvernement des étables et des écuries: grâce à lui, les vaches donnaient un lait abondant en beurre, et les chevaux avaient la croupe ronde, le poil luisant. Il était, en un mot, le bon génie de la famille, mais c’était à la condition que chacun eût pour lui les égards auxquels il avait droit. Si peu qu’on lui manquât, sa bonté se changeait en malice et il n’était point de mauvais tours dont il ne fût capable envers les gens qui l’avaient offensé, comme de renverser le contenu des marmites sur le foyer, d’embrouiller la laine autour des quenouilles, de rendre infumable le tabac des pipes, d’emmêler inextricablement les crins des chevaux, de dessécher le pis des vaches ou de faire peler le dos des brebis. Aussi s’efforçait-on de ne le point mécontenter. On respectait soigneusement toutes ses habitudes, toutes ses manies. C’est ainsi que, chez mes parents, notre vieille bonne Filie n’enlevait jamais le trépied du feu sans avoir la précaution de l’asperger d’eau pour le refroidir, avant de le ranger au coin de l’âtre. Si vous lui demandiez pourquoi ce rite, elle vous répondait:

‘Pour que le lutin ne s’y brûle pas, si, tout à l’heure, il s’asseyait dessus.’

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Il appartient encore, je suppose, à la catégorie des hommes-fées, ce *Bugul-Noz*, ce mystérieux ‘Berger de la nuit’ dont les Bretons des campagnes voient se dresser, au crépuscule, la haute et troublante silhouette, si, d’aventure, il leur arrive de rentrer tard du labour. On n’a jamais pu me renseigner exactement sur le genre de troupeau qu’il faisait paître, ni sur ce que présageait sa rencontre. Le plus souvent, on la redoute. Mais, comme l’observait avec raison une de mes conteuses, Lise Bellec, s’il est préférable d’éviter le *Bugul-Noz*, il ne s’ensuit pas, pour cela, que ce soit un méchant Esprit. D’après elle, il remplirait plutôt une fonction salutaire, en signifiant aux humains, par sa venue, que la nuit n’est pas faite pour s’attarder aux champs ou sur les chemins, mais pour s’enfermer derrière les portes closes et pour dormir. Ce berger des ombres serait donc, somme toute, une manière de bon pasteur. C’est pour assurer notre repos et notre sécurité, c’est pour nous soustraire aux excès du travail et aux embûches de la nuit qu’il nous force, brebis imprudentes, à regagner promptement le bercail.

Sans doute est-ce un rôle tutélaire à peu près semblable qui, dans la croyance populaire, est dévolu à un autre homme-fée, plus spécialement affecté au rivage de la mer, comme l’indique son nom de *Yann-An-Ôd*. Il n’y a pas, sur tout le littoral maritime de la Bretagne ou, comme on dit, dans tout l’*armor*, une seule région où l’existence de ce ‘Jean des Grèves’ ne soit tenue pour un fait certain, dûment constaté, indéniable. On lui prête des formes variables et des aspects différents. C’est tantôt un géant, tantôt un nain. Il porte tantôt un ‘suroit’ de toile huilée, tantôt un large chapeau de feutre noir. Parfois, il s’appuie sur une rame et fait penser au personnage énigmatique, armé du même attribut, qu’Ulysse doit suivre, dans l’*Odyssée*. Mais, toujours, c’est un héros marin dont la mission est de parcourir les plages, en poussant par intervalles de longs cris stridents, propres à effrayer les pêcheurs qui se seraient laissé surprendre dehors par les ténèbres de la nuit. Il ne fait de mal qu’à ceux qui récalcitrent; encore ne les frappe-t-il que dans leur intérêt, pour les contraindre à se mettre à l’abri. Il est, avant tout, un ‘avertisseur’. Ses cris ne rappellent pas seulement au logis les gens

attardés sur les grèves; ils signalent aussi le dangereux voisinage de la côte aux marins qui sont en mer et, par là, suppléent à l'insuffisance du mugissement des sirènes ou de la lumière des phares.

Remarquons, à ce propos, qu'on relève un trait analogue dans la légende des vieux saints armoricains, pour la plupart émigrés d'Irlande. Un de leurs exercices coutumiers consistait à déambuler de nuit le long des côtes où ils avaient établi leurs oratoires, en agitant des clochettes de fer battu dont les tintements étaient destinés, comme les cris de *Yann-An-Ôd*, à prévenir les navigateurs que la terre était proche.

Je suis persuadé que le culte des saints, qui est la première et la plus fervente des dévotions bretonnes, conserve bien des traits d'une religion plus ancienne où la croyance aux fées jouait le principal rôle. Et il en va de même, j'en suis convaincu, pour ces mythes funéraires que j'ai recueillis sous le titre de *La Légende de la Mort* chez les Bretons armoricains. A vrai dire, dans la conception bretonne, les morts ne sont pas morts; ils vivent d'une vie mystérieuse en marge de la vie réelle, mais leur monde reste, en définitive, tout mêlé au nôtre et, sitôt que la nuit tombe, sitôt que les vivants proprement dits s'abandonnent à la mort momentanée du sommeil, les soi-disant morts redeviennent les habitants de la terre qu'ils n'ont jamais quittée. Ils reprennent leur place à leur foyer d'autrefois, ils vaquent à leurs anciens travaux, ils s'intéressent au logis, aux champs, à la barque; ils se comportent, en un mot, comme ce peuple des hommes et des femmes-fées qui formait jadis une espèce d'humanité plus fine et plus délicate au milieu de la véritable humanité.

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J'aurais encore, mon cher monsieur Wentz, bien d'autres types à évoquer, dans cet intermonde de la féerie bretonne qui, chez mes compatriotes, ne se confond ni avec ce monde-ci, ni avec l'autre, mais participe à la fois de tous les deux, par un singulier mélange de naturel et de surnaturel. Je n'ai voulu, en ces lignes rapides, que montrer la richesse de la matière à laquelle vous avez, avec tant de conscience et de ferveur, appliqué votre effort. Et maintenant, que les fées vous soient douces, mon cher ami!

Elles ne seront que justes en favorisant de toute leur tendresse le jeune et brillant écrivain qui vient de restaurer leur culte en rénovant leur gloire.

Rennes,

ce 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 1910.

### Breton Fairies or *Fées*

In Lower Brittany, which is the genuinely Celtic part of Armorica, instead of finding a widespread folk-belief in fairies of the kind existing in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, we find a widespread folk-belief in the existence of the dead, and to a less extent in that of the *corrigans* tribes. For our Psychological Theory this is very significant. It seems to indicate that among the Bretons—who are one of the most conservative Celtic peoples—the Fairy-Faith finds its chief expression in a belief that men live after death in an invisible world, just as in Ireland the dead and fairies live in Fairyland. This opinion was first suggested to me by Professor Anatole Le Braz, author of *La Légende de la Mort*, and by Professor Georges Dottin, both of the University of Rennes. But before evidence to sustain and to illustrate this opinion is offered, it will be well to consider the less important Breton *fées* or beings like them, and then *corrigans* and *nains* (dwarfs).

*The 'Grac'hed Coz'.*—F. M. Luzel, who collected so many of the popular stories in Brittany, found that what few *fées* or fairies there are almost always appear in folk-lore as little old women, or as the Breton story-teller usually calls them, *Grac'hed coz*. I have selected and abridged the following legendary tale from his works to illustrate the nature of these Breton fairy-folk:—

In ancient times, as we read in *La Princesse Blondine*, a rich nobleman had three sons; the oldest was called Cado, the second, Méliau, and the youngest, Yvon. One day, as they were together in a forest with their bows and arrows, they met a little old woman whom they had never seen before,



and she was carrying on her head a jar of water. ‘Are you able, lads,’ Cado asked his two brothers, ‘to break with an arrow the jar of the little old woman without touching her?’ ‘We do not wish to try it,’ they said, fearing to injure the good woman. ‘All right, I’ll do it then, watch me.’ And Cado took his bow and let fly an arrow. The arrow went straight to its mark and split the jar without touching the little old woman; but the water wet her to the skin, and, in anger, she said to the skilful archer: ‘You have failed, Cado, and I will be revenged on you for this. From now until you have found the Princess Blondine all the members of your body will tremble as leaves on a tree tremble when the north wind blows.’ And instantly Cado was seized by a trembling malady in all his body. The three brothers returned home and told their father what had happened; and the father, turning to Cado, said: ‘Alas, my unfortunate son, you have failed. It is now necessary for you to travel until you find the Princess Blondine, as the *fée* said, for that little old woman was a *fée*, and no doctor in the world can cure the malady she has put upon you.’<sup>76</sup>

‘*Fées*’ of Lower Brittany.—Throughout the Morbihan and Finistère, I found that stories about *fées* are much less common than about *corrigans*, and in some localities extremely rare; but the ones I have been fortunate enough to collect are much the same in character as those gathered in the Côtes-du-Nord by Luzel, and elsewhere by other collectors. Those I here record were told to me at Carnac during the summer of 1909; the first one by M. Yvonne Daniel, a native of the Île de Croix (off the coast north-west of Carnac); and the others by M. Goulven Le Scour.<sup>77</sup>

‘The little Île de Croix was especially famous for its old *fées*; and the following legend is still believed by its oldest inhabitants:—“An aged man who had suffered long from leprosy was certain to die within a short time, when a woman bent double with age entered his house. She asked from what malady he suffered, and on being informed began to say prayers. Then she breathed upon the sores of the leper, and almost suddenly disappeared: the *fée* had cured him.”’

‘It is certain that about fifty years ago the people in Finistère still believed in *fées*. It was thought that the *fées* were spirits who came to

predict some unexpected event in the family. They came especially to console orphans who had very unkind step-mothers. In their youth, Tanguy du Chatel and his sister Eudes were protected by a *fée* against the misfortune which pursued them; the history of Brittany says so. In Léon it is said that the *fées* served to guide unfortunate people, consoling them with the promise of a happy and victorious future. In the Cornouailles, on the contrary, it is said that the *fées* were very evilly disposed, that they were demons.

‘My grandmother, Marie Le Bras, had related to me that one evening an old *fée* arrived in my village, Kerouledic (Finistère), and asked for hospitality. It was about the year 1830. The *fée* was received; and before going to bed she predicted that the little daughter whom the mother was dressing in night-clothes would be found dead in the cradle the next day. This prediction was only laughed at; but in the morning the little one was dead in her cradle, her eyes raised toward Heaven. The *fée*, who had slept in the stable, was gone.’

In these last three accounts, by M. Le Scour, we observe three quite different ideas concerning the Breton fairies or *fées*: in Finistère and in Léon the *fées* are regarded as good protecting spirits, almost like ancestral spirits, which originally they may have been; in the Cornouailles they are evil spirits; while in the third account, about the old *fée*—and in the legend of the leper cured by a *fée*—the *fées* are rationalized, as in Luzel’s tale quoted above, into sorceresses or *Grac’hed Coz*.

*Children Changed by ‘Fées’*.—M. Goulven Le Scour, at my request, wrote down in French the following account of actual changelings in Finistère:—‘I remember very well that there was a woman of the village of Kergoff, in Plouneventer, who was called——,<sup>78</sup> the mother of a family. When she had her first child, a very strong and very pretty boy, she noticed one morning that he had been changed during the night; there was no longer the fine baby she had put to bed in the evening; there was, instead, an infant hideous to look at, greatly deformed, hunchbacked, and crooked, and of a black colour. The poor woman knew that a *fée* had entered the house during the night and had changed her child.

‘This changed infant still lives, and to-day he is about seventy years old. He has all the possible vices; and he has tried many times to kill his mother. He is a veritable demon; he often predicts the future, and has a habit of running abroad during the night. They call him the “Little *Corrigan*”, and everybody flees from him. Being poor and infirm now, he has been obliged to beg, and people give him alms because they have great fear of him. His nick-name is Olier.

‘This woman had a second, then a third child, both of whom were seen by everybody to have been born with no infirmity; and, in turn, each of these two was stolen by a *fée* and replaced by a little hunchback. The second child was a most beautiful daughter. She was *taken* during the night and replaced by a little girl babe, so deformed that it resembled a ball. If her brother Olier was bad, she was even worse; she was the terror of the village, and they called her Anniac. The third child met the same luck, but was not so bad as the first and second.

‘The poor mother, greatly worried at seeing what had happened, related her troubles to another woman. This woman said to her, “If you have another child, place with it in the cradle a little sprig of box-wood which has been blessed (by a priest), and the *fée* will no longer have the power of stealing your children.” And when a fourth child was born to the unfortunate woman it was not stolen, for she placed in the cradle a sprig of box-wood which had been blessed on Palm Sunday (*Dimanche des Rameaux*).<sup>79</sup>

‘The first three children I knew very well, and they were certainly hunchbacked: it is pretended in the country that the *fées* who come at night to make changelings always leave in exchange hunchbacked infants. It is equally pretended that a mother who has had her child so changed need do nothing more than leave the little hunchback out of doors crying during entire hours, and that the *fée* hearing it will come and put the true child in its place. Unfortunately, Yvonna—— did not know what she should have done in order to have her own children again.’

*Transformation Power of ‘Fées’.*—At Kerallan, near Carnac, this is what Madame Louise Le Rouzic said about the transformation power of

*fées*:—‘It is said that the *fées* of the region when insulted sometimes changed men into beasts or into stones.’<sup>80</sup>

*Other Breton Fairies*.—Besides the various types of *fées* already described, we find in Luzel’s collected stories a few other types of fairy-like beings: in *Les Compagnons* (The Companions),<sup>81</sup> the *fée* is a magpie in a forest near Rennes—just as in other Celtic lands, fairies likewise often appear as birds (see our study, pp. 302 ff.); in *La Princesse de l’Étoile Brillante* (The Princess of the Brilliant Star),<sup>81</sup> a princess under the form of a duck plays the part of a fairy (cf. how fairy women took the form of water-fowls in the tale entitled the *Sick Bed of Cuchulainn* (see our study, p. 345); in *Pipi Menou et les Femmes Volantes* (Pipi Menou and the Flying Women),<sup>81</sup> there are fairy women as swan-maidens; and then there are yet to be mentioned *Les Morgans de l’île d’Ouessant* (The *Morgans* of the Isle of Ushant), who live under the sea in rare palaces where mortals whom they love and marry are able to exist with them. In some legends of the *Morgans*, like one recorded by Luzel, the men and women of this water-fairy race, or the *Morgans* and *Morganezed*, seem like anthropomorphosed survivals of ancient sea-divinities, such, for example, as the sea-god called *Shony*, to whom the people of Lewis, Western Hebrides, still pour libations that he may send in sea-weed, and the sea-god to whom anciently the people of Iona poured libations.<sup>82</sup>

*The ‘Morgan’*.—To M. J. Cuillandre (Glanmor), President of the *Fédération des Étudiants Bretons*, I am indebted for the following weird legend of the *Morgan*, as it is told among the Breton fisher-folk on the Île Molène, Finistère:—‘Following a legend which I have collected on the Île Molène, the *Morgan* is a fairy eternally young, a virgin seductress whose passion, never satisfied, drives her to despair. Her place of abode is beneath the sea; there she possesses marvellous palaces where gold and diamonds glimmer. Accompanied by other fairies, of whom she is in some respects the queen, she rises to the surface of the waters in the splendour of her unveiled beauty. By day she slumbers amid the coolness of grottoes, and woe to him who troubles her sleep. By night she lets herself be lulled by the waves in the neighbourhood of the rocks. The sea-foam crystallizes at her

touch into precious stones, of whiteness as dazzling as that of her body. By moonlight she moans as she combs her fair hair with a comb of fine gold, and she sings in a harmonious voice a plaintive melody whose charm is irresistible. The sailor who listens to it feels himself drawn toward her, without power to break the charm which drags him onward to his destruction; the bark is broken upon the reefs: the man is in the sea, and the *Morgan* utters a cry of joy. But the arms of the fairy clasp only a corpse; for at her touch men die, and it is this which causes the despair of the amorous and inviolate *Morgan*. She being pagan, it suffices to have been touched by her in order to suffer the saddest fate which can be reserved to a Christian. The unfortunate one whom she had clasped is condemned to wander for ever in the trough of the waters, his eyes wide open, the mark of baptism effaced from his forehead. Never will his poor remains know the sweetness of reposing in holy ground, never will he have a tomb where his kindred might come to pray and to weep.’

*Origin of the ‘Morgan’.*—The following legendary origin is attributed to the *Morgan* by M. Goulven Le Scour, our Carnac witness:—‘Following the old people and the Breton legends, the *Morgan* (*Mari Morgan* in Breton) was Dahut, the daughter of King Gradlon, who was ruler of the city of Is. Legend records that when Dahut had entered at night the bedchamber of her father and had cut from around his neck the cord which held the key of the sea-dike flood-gates, and had given this key to the Black Prince, under whose evil love she had fallen, and who, according to belief, was no other than the Devil, St. Guenolé soon afterwards began to cry aloud, “Great King, arise! The flood-gates are open, and the sea is no longer restrained!”<sup>83</sup> Suddenly the old King Gradlon arose, and, leaping on his horse, was fleeing from the city with St. Guenolé, when he encountered his own daughter amid the waves. She piteously begged aid of her father, and he took her up behind him on the horse; but St. Guenolé, seeing that the waters were gaining on them, said to the king, “Throw into the sea the demon you have behind you, and we shall be saved!” Thereupon Gradlon flung his daughter into the abyss, and he and St. Guenolé were saved. Since that time, the fishermen declare that they have seen, in times of rough sea

and clear moonlight, Dahut, daughter of King Gradlon, sitting on the rocks combing her fair hair and singing, in the place where her father flung her. And to-day there is recognized under the Breton name *Marie Morgan*, the daughter who sings amid the sea.'

*Breton Fairyland Legends.*—In a legend concerning Mona and the king of the *Morgans*, much like the Christabel story of English poets, we have a picture of a fairyland not under ground, but under sea; and this legend of Mona and her *Morgan* lover is one of the most beautiful of all the fairytales of Brittany.<sup>84</sup> Another one of Luzel's legends, concerning a maiden who married a dead man, shows us Fairyland as a world of the dead. It is a very strange legend, and one directly bearing on the Psychological Theory; for this dead man, who is a dead priest, has a palace in a realm of enchantment, and to enter his country one must have a white fairy-wand with which to strike 'in the form of a cross' two blows upon the rock concealing the entrance.[84] M. Paul Sébillot records from Upper Brittany a tradition that beneath the sea-waves there one can see a subterranean world containing fields and villages and beautiful castles; and it is so pleasant a world that mortals going there find years no longer than days.<sup>85</sup>

*Fairies of Upper Brittany.*<sup>86</sup>—Principally in Upper Brittany, M. Sébillot found rich folk-lore concerning *fées*, though some of his material is drawn from peasants and fishermen who are not so purely Celtic as those in Lower Brittany; and he very concisely summarizes the various names there given to the fairy-folk as follows:—'They are generally called *Fées* (Fairies), sometimes *Fêtes* (Fates), a name nearer than *fées* to the Latin *Fata*; *Fête* (fem.) and *Fête* (mas.) are both used, and from *Fête* is probably derived *Faito* or *Faitaud*, which is the name borne by the fathers, the husbands, or the children of the *fées* (Saint-Cast). Near Saint-Briac (Ille-et-Vilaine) they are sometimes called *Fions*; this term, which is applied to both sexes, seems also to designate the mischievous *lutins* (sprites). Round the Mené, in the cantons of Collinée and of Moncontour, they are called *Margot la Fée*, or *ma Commère* (my Godmother) *Margot*, or even the *Bonne Femme* (Good Woman) *Margot*. On the coast they are often enough called by the name of *Bonnes Dames* (Good Ladies), or of *nos Bonnes Mères les Fées* (our Good

Mothers the Fairies); usually they are spoken of with a certain respect.’<sup>87</sup> As the same authority suggests, probably the most characteristic *Fées* in Upper Brittany are the *Fées des Houles* (Fairies of the Billows); and traditions say that they lived in natural caverns or grottoes in the sea-cliffs. They form a distinct class of sea-fairies unknown elsewhere in France or Europe.<sup>88</sup> M. Sébillot regards them as sea-divinities greatly rationalized. Associated with them are the *fions*, a race of dwarfs having swords no bigger than pins.<sup>88</sup> A pretty legend about magic buckwheat cakes, which in different forms is widespread throughout all Brittany, is told of these little cave-dwelling fairies:—

Like the larger *fées* the *fions* kept cattle; and one day a black cow belonging to the *fions* of Pont-aux-Hommes-Nées ate the buckwheat in the field of a woman of that neighbourhood. The woman went to the *fions* to complain, and in reply to her a voice said: ‘Hold your tongue; you will be paid for your buckwheat!’ Thereupon the *fions* gave the woman a cupful of buckwheat, and promised her that it would never diminish so long as none should be given away. That year buckwheat was very scarce, but no matter how many buckwheat cakes the woman and her family ate there was never diminution in the amount of the fairy buckwheat. At last, however, the unfortunate hour came. A rag-gatherer arrived and asked for food. Thoughtlessly the woman gave him one of her buckwheat cakes, and suddenly, as though by magic, all the rest of the buckwheat disappeared for ever.

Along the Rance the inhabitants tell about *fées* who appear during storms. These storm-fairies are dressed in the colours of the rainbow, and pass along following a most beautiful *fée* who is mounted in a boat made from a nautilus of the southern seas. And the boat is drawn by two sea-crabs. In no other place in Brittany are similar *fées* said to exist.<sup>89</sup> In Upper Brittany, as in Lower Brittany, the *fées* generally had their abodes in tumuli, in dolmens, in forests, in waste lands where there are great rocks, or about menhirs; and many other kinds of spirits lived in the sea and troubled sailors and fisher-folk. Like all fairy-folk of Celtic countries, those of Upper Brittany were given to stealing children. Thus at Dinard not long ago there

was a woman more than thirty years old who was no bigger than a girl of ten, and it was said she was a fairy changeling.<sup>90</sup> In Lower Brittany the *taking* of children was often attributed to dwarfs rather than to *fées*, though the method of making the changeling speak is the same as in Upper Brittany, namely, to place in such a manner before an open fire a number of eggshells filled with water that they appear to the changeling—who is placed where he can well observe all the proceedings—like so many small pots of cooking food; whereupon, being greatly astonished at the unusual sight, he forgets himself and speaks for the first time, thus betraying his demon nature.

The following midwife story, as told by J. M. Comault, of Gouray, in 1881, is quite a parallel to the one we have recorded (on p. 54) as coming from Grange, Ireland:—A midwife who delivered a *Margot la fée* carelessly allowed some of the fairy ointment to get on one of her own eyes. The eye at once became clairvoyant, so that she beheld the *fées* in their true nature. And, quite like a midwife in a similar story about the *fées des houles*, this midwife happened to see a *fée* in the act of stealing, and spoke to her. Thereupon the *fée* asked the midwife with which eye she beheld her, and when the midwife indicated which one it was, the *fée* pulled it out.<sup>91</sup>

Generally, like their relatives in insular Celtdom, the fairies of Upper Brittany could assume various forms, and could even transform the human body; and they were given to playing tricks on mortals, and always to taking revenge on them if ill-treated. In most ways they were like other races of fairies, Celtic and non-Celtic, though very much anthropomorphosed in their nature by the peasant and mariner.

As a rule, the *fées* of Upper Brittany are described in legend as young and very beautiful. Some, however, appear to be centuries old, with teeth as long as a human hand, and with backs covered with seaweeds, and mussels, or other marine growths, as an indication of their great age.<sup>92</sup> At Saint-Cast they are said to be dressed (like the *corrigans* at Carnac, see p. 208) in *toile*, a kind of heavy linen cloth.<sup>92</sup>

On the sea-coast of Upper Brittany the popular opinion is that the *fées* are a fallen race condemned to an earthly exile for a certain period. In the



region of the Mené, canton of Collinée, the old folk say that, after the angels revolted, those left in paradise were divided into two parts: those who fought on the side of God and those who remained neutral. These last, already half-fallen, were sent to the earth for a time, and became the *fées*.<sup>92</sup>

The general belief in the interior of Brittany is that the *fées* once existed, but that they disappeared as their country was changed by modern conditions. In the region of the Mené and of Ercé (Ille-et-Vilaine) it is said that for more than a century there have been no *fées*; and on the sea-coast, where it is still firmly believed that the *fées* used to live in the billows or amid certain grottoes in the cliffs against which the billows broke, the opinion is that they disappeared at the beginning of the last century. The oldest Bretons say that their parents or grandparents often spoke about having seen *fées*, but very rarely do they say that they themselves have seen *fées*. M. Sébillot found only two who had. One was an old needle-woman of Saint-Cast, who had such fear of *fées* that if she was on her way to do some sewing in the country, and it was night, she always took a long circuitous route to avoid passing near a field known as the *Couvent des Fées*. The other was Marie Chéhu, a woman eighty-eight years old.<sup>93</sup>

### **The *Corrigan* Race<sup>94</sup>**

It is the *corrigan* race, however, which, more than *fées* or fairies, forms a large part of the invisible inhabitants of Brittany; and this race of *corrigans* and *nains* (dwarfs) may be made to include many kinds of *lutins*, or as they are often called by the peasant, *follets* or *esprits follets* (playful elves). Though the peasants both in Upper and in Lower Brittany may have no strong faith in *fées*, most of them say that *corrigans*, or *nains*, and mischievous house-haunting spirits still exist. But in a few localities, as M. Sébillot discovered, there is an opinion that the *lutins* departed with the *fées*, and with them will return in this century, because during each century with an odd number like 1900, the fairy tribes of all kinds are said to be visible or to reappear among men, and to become invisible or to disappear

during each century with an even number like 1800. So this is the visible century.

*Corrigans* and *follets* only show themselves at night, or in the twilight. No one knows where they pass the day-time. Some *lutins* or *follets*, after the manner of Scotch kelpies, live solitary lives in lakes or ponds (whereas *corrigans* are socially united in groups or families), and amuse themselves by playing tricks on travellers passing by after dark. Souvestre records a story showing how the *lutins* can assume any animal form, but that their natural form is that of a little man dressed in green; and that the *corrigans* have declared war on them for being too friendly to men.<sup>95</sup> From what follows about *lutins*, by M. Goulven Le Scour, they show affinity with Pucks and such shape-shifting hobgoblins as are found in Wales:—‘The *lutins* were little dwarfs who generally appeared at cross-roads to attack belated travellers. And it is related in Breton legends that these *lutins* sometimes transformed themselves into black horses or into goats; and whoever then had the misfortune to encounter them sometimes found his life in danger, and was always seized with great terror.’ But generally, what the Breton peasant tells about *corrigans* he is apt to tell at another time about *lutins*. And both tribes of beings, so far as they can be distinguished, are the same as the elfish peoples—pixies in Cornwall, Robin Good-fellows in England, goblins in Wales, or brownies in Scotland. Both *corrigans* and *lutins* are supposed to guard hidden treasure; some trouble horses at night; some, like their English cousins, may help in the house-work after all the family are asleep; some cause nightmare; some carry a torch like a Welsh death-candle; some trouble men and women like obsessing spirits; and nearly all of them are mischievous. In an article in the *Revue des Traditions Populaires* (v. 101), M. Sébillot has classified more than fifty names given to *lutins* and *corrigans* in Lower Brittany, according to the form under which these spirits appear, their peculiar traits, dwelling-places, and the country they inhabit.

Like the fairies in Britain and Ireland, the *corrigans* and the Cornish pixies find their favourite amusement in the circular dance. When the moon is clear and bright they gather for their frolic near menhirs, and dolmens,

and tumuli, and at cross-roads, or even in the open country; and they never miss an opportunity of enticing a mortal passing by to join them. If he happens to be a good-natured man and enters their sport heartily, they treat him quite as a companion, and may even do him some good turn; but if he is not agreeable they will make him dance until he falls down exhausted, and should he commit some act thoroughly displeasing to them he will meet their certain revenge. According to a story reported from Lorient (Morbihan)<sup>96</sup> it is taboo for the *corrigans* to make a complete enumeration of the days of the week:—

*The ‘Corrigan’ Taboo.*—‘At night, the *corrigans* dance, singing, “Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday”; they are prohibited from completing the enumeration of the days of the week. A *corrigan* having had the misfortune to permit himself to be tempted to add “Saturday”, immediately became hunchbacked. His comrades, stupefied and distressed, attempted in vain to knock in his hump with blows of their fists.’

*‘Corrigans’ at Carnac.*—How the tradition of the dancing *corrigans* and their weekday song still lives, appears from the following accounts which I found at and near Carnac, the first account having been given during January 1909 by Madame Marie Ezanno, of Carnac, then sixty-six years old:—‘The *corrigans* are little dwarfs who formerly, by moonlight, used to dance in a circle on the prairies. They sang a song the couplet of which was not understood, but only the refrain, translated in Breton: “*Di Lun* (Monday), *Di Merh* (Tuesday), *Di Merhier* (Wednesday).”

‘They whistled in order to assemble. Where they danced mushrooms grew; and it was necessary to maintain silence so as not to interrupt them in their dance. They were often very brutal towards a man who fell under their power, and if they had a grudge against him they would make him submit to the greatest tortures. The peasants believed strongly in the *corrigans*, because they thus saw them and heard them. The *corrigans* dressed in very coarse white linen cloth. They were mischievous spirits (*esprits follets*), who lived under dolmens.’

One morning, M. Lemort and myself called upon Madame Louise Le Rouzic in her neat home at Kerallan, a little group of thatched cottages about a mile from Carnac. As we entered, Madame Le Rouzic herself was sitting on a long wooden bench by the window knitting, and her daughter was watching the savoury-smelling dinner as it boiled in great iron pots hanging from chains over a brilliant fire on the hearth. Large gleaming brass basins were ranged on a shelf above the broad open chimney-place wherein the fire burned, and massive bedsteads carved after the Breton style stood on the stone floor. When many things had been talked about, our conversation turned to *corrigans*, and then the good woman of the house told us these tales:—

*'Corrigans' at Church.*—‘In former times a young girl having taken the keys of the church (presumably at Carnac) and having entered it, found the *corrigans* about to dance; and the *corrigans* were singing, “*Lundi, Mardi*” (Monday, Tuesday). On seeing the young girl, they stopped, surrounded her, and invited her to dance with them. She accepted, and, in singing, added to their song “*Mercredi*” (Wednesday). In amazement, the *corrigans* cried joyfully, “She has added something to our song; what shall we give her as recompense?” And they gave her a bracelet. A friend of hers meeting her, asked where the fine bracelet came from; and the young girl told what had happened. The second girl hurried to the church, and found the *corrigans* still dancing the *rond*. She joined their dance, and, in singing, added “*Jeudi*” (Thursday) to their song; but that broke the cadence; and the *corrigans* in fury, instead of recompensing her wished to punish her. “What shall we do to her?” one of them cried. “Let the day be as night to her!” the others replied. And by day, wherever she went, she saw only the night.’

*The 'Corrigans' Sabbath.*—‘Where my grandfather lived,’ continued Madame Le Rouzic, ‘there was a young girl who went to the sabbath of the *corrigans*; and when she returned and was asked where she had been, said, “I have travelled over water, wood, and hedges.” And she related all she had seen and heard. Then one night, afterwards, the *corrigans* came into the house, beat her, and dragged her from bed. Upon hearing the uproar, my

grandfather arose and found the girl lying flat on the stone floor. “Never question me again,” she said to him, “or they will kill me.”<sup>97</sup>

‘*Corrigans*’ as *Fairies*.—Some Breton legends give *corrigans* the chief characteristics of fairies in Celtic Britain and Ireland; and Villemarqué in his *Barzaz Breiz* (pp. 25–30) makes the Breton word *corrigan* synonymous with *fée* or fairy, thus:—‘*Le Seigneur Nann et la Fée (Aotrou Nann hag ar Corrigan)*.’ In this legend the *corrigan* seems clearly enough to be a water-fairy: ‘The *Korrigan* was seated at the edge of her fountain, and she was combing her long fair hair.’ But unlike most water-fairies, the *Fée* lives in a grotto, which, according to Villemarqué, is one of those ancient monuments called in Breton *dolmen*, or *ti ar corrigan*; in French, *Table de pierres*, or *Grotte aux Fées*—like the famous one near Rennes. The fountain where the *Fée* was seated seems to be one of those sacred fountains, which, as Villemarqué says, are often found near a *Grotte aux Fées*, and called *Fontaine de la Fée*, or in Breton, *Feunteun ar corrigan*. In another of Villemarqué’s legends, *L’Enfant Supposé*, after the egg-shell test has been used and the little *corrigan*-changeling is replaced by the real child, the latter as though all the while it had been in an unconscious trance-state—which has a curious bearing on our Psychological Theory—stretches forth its arms and awakening exclaims, ‘Ah! mother, what a long time I have been asleep.’<sup>98</sup> And in *Les Nains* we see the little *Duz* or dwarfs inhabiting a cave and guarding treasures.<sup>98</sup>

In his introduction to the *Barzaz Breiz*, Villemarqué describes *les korrigan*, whom he equates with *les fées*, as very similar to ordinary fairies. They can foretell the future, they know the art of war—quite like the Irish ‘gentry’ or Tuatha De Danann—they can assume any animal form, and are able to travel from one end of the world to another in the twinkling of an eye. They love feasting and music—like all Celtic fairy-folk; and dance in a circle holding hands, but at the least noise disappear. Their favourite haunts are near fountains and dolmens. They are little beings not more than two feet high, and beautifully proportioned, with bodies as aerial and transparent as those of wasps. And like all fairy, or elvish races, and like the Breton *Morgans* or water-spirits, they are given to stealing the children of

mortals. Professor J. Loth has called my attention to an unpublished Breton legend of his collection, in which there are fairy-like beings comparable to these described by Villemarqué; and he tells me, too, that throughout Brittany one finds to-day the counterpart of the Welsh *Tylwyth Teg* or 'Fair Family', and that both in Wales and Brittany the *Tylwyth Teg* are popularly described as little women, or maidens, like fairies no larger than children.

*Fairies and Dwarfs.*—Where Villemarqué draws a clear distinction is between these *korrigan* and *fées* on the one hand, and the *nains* or dwarfs on the other. These last are what we have found associated or identified with *corrigans* in the Morbihan. Villemarqué describes the *nains* as a hideous race of beings with dark or even black hairy bodies, with voices like old men, and with little sparkling black eyes. They are fond of playing tricks on mortals who fall into their power; and are given to singing in a circular dance the weekday song. Very often *corrigans* regarded as *nains*, equally with all kinds of *lutins*, are believed to be evil spirits or demons condemned to live here on earth in a penitential state for an indefinite time; and sometimes they seem not much different from what Irish Celts, when talking of fairies, call fallen angels. *Le Nain de Kerhuïton*, translated from Breton by Professor J. Loth, in part illustrates this:—Upon seeing water boiling in a number of egg-shells ranged before an open fire, a *polpegan*-changeling is so greatly astonished that he unwittingly speaks for the first time, and says, 'Here I am almost one hundred years old, and never such a thing have I yet seen!' 'Ah! son of Satan!' then cries out the mother, as she comes from her place of hiding and beats the *polpegan*—who thus by means of the egg-shell test has been tricked into revealing his demon nature.<sup>99</sup> In a parallel story, reported by Villemarqué in his *Barzaz Breiz* (p. 33 n.), a *nain*-changeling is equally astonished to see a similar row of egg-shells boiling before an open fire like so many pots of food, and gives himself away through the following remark:—'I have seen the acorn before the oak; I have seen the egg before the white chicken: I have never seen the equal to this.'

*Nature of the 'Corrigans'.*—As to the general ideas about the *corrigans*, M. Le Scour says:—'Formerly the *corrigans* were the terror of the country-

folk, especially in Finistère, in the Morbihan, and throughout the Côtes-du-Nord. They were believed to be souls in pain condemned to wander at night in waste lands and marshes. Sometimes they were seen as dwarfs; and often they were not seen at all, but were heard in houses making an infernal noise. Unlike the *lavandières de nuits* (phantom washerwomen of the night), they were heard only in summer, never in winter.’

## **The Breton Legend of the Dead**

We come now to the Breton Legend of the Dead, common generally to all parts of Armorica, though probably even more widespread in Lower Brittany than in Upper Brittany; and this we call the Armorican Fairy-Faith. Even where the peasants have no faith in *fées* or fairies, and where their faith in *corrigans* is weak or almost gone, there is a strong conviction among them that the souls of the dead can show themselves to the living, a vigorous belief in apparitions, phantom-funerals, and various death-warnings. As Professor Anatole Le Braz has so well said in his introduction to *La Légende de la Mort*, ‘the whole conscience of these people is fundamentally directed toward that which concerns death. And the ideas which they form of it, in spite of the strong Christian imprint which they have received, do not seem much different from those which we have pointed out among their pagan ancestors. For them, as for the primitive Celts, death is less a change of condition than a journey, a departure for another world.’ And thus it seems that this most popular of the Breton folk-beliefs is genuinely Celtic and extremely ancient. As Renan has said, the Celtic people are ‘a race mysterious, having knowledge of the future and the secret of death’.<sup>100</sup> And whereas in Ireland unusual happenings or strange accidents and death are attributed to fairy interference, in Brittany they are attributed to the influence of the dead.

The Breton Celt makes no distinction between the living and the dead. All alike inhabit this world, the one being visible, the other invisible. Though seers can at all times behold the dead, on November Eve (*La*

*Toussaint*) and on Christmas Eve they are most numerous and most easily seen; and no peasant would think of questioning their existence. In Ireland and Scotland the country-folk fear to speak of fairies save through an euphemism, and the Bretons speak of the dead indirectly, and even then with fear and trembling.

The following legend, which I found at Carnac, will serve to illustrate both the profundity of the belief in the power of the dead over the living in Lower Brittany, and how deeply the people can be stirred by the predictions of one who can see the dead; and the legend is quite typical of those so common in Armorica:—

*Foretelling Deaths.*—‘Formerly there was a woman whom spirits impelled to rise from her bed, it made no difference at what hour of the night, in order to behold funerals in the future. She predicted who should die, who should carry the corpse, who the cross, and who should follow the *cortège*. Her predictions frightened every one, and made her such a terror to the country that the mayor had threatened to take legal proceedings against her if she continued her practice; but she was compelled to tell the things which the spirits showed her. It is about ten years since this woman died in the hospital at Auray.’

*Testimony of a Breton Seeress.*—There lives in the little hamlet of Kerlois, less than a mile from Carnac, a Breton seeress, a woman who since eight years of age has been privileged to behold the world invisible and its inhabitants, quite like the woman who died at Auray. She is Madame Eugénie Le Port, now forty-two years old, and what she tells of things seen in this invisible world which surrounds her, might easily be taken for Irish legends about fairies. Knowing very little French, because she is thoroughly Breton, Madame Le Port described her visions in her own native tongue, and her eldest daughter acted as interpreter. I had known the good woman since the previous winter, and so we were able to converse familiarly; and as I sat in her own little cottage, in company with her husband and daughters, and with M. Lemort, who acted as recording secretary, this is what she said in her clear earnest manner in answer to my questions:—



‘We believe that the spirits of our ancestors surround us and live with us. One day on a road from Carnac I encountered a woman of Kergoellec who had been dead eight days. I asked her to move to one side so that I could pass, and she vanished. This was eleven o’clock in the morning. I saw her at another time in the Marsh of Breno; I spoke, but she did not reply. On the route from Plouharnel (near Carnac) I saw in the day-time the funeral of a woman who did not die until fifteen days afterwards. I recognized perfectly all the people who took part in it; but the person with me saw nothing. Another time, near three o’clock in the afternoon, and eight days before her death, I saw upon the same route the funeral of a woman who was drowned. And I have seen a phantom horse going to the sabbath, and as if forced along against its will, for it reared and pawed the earth. When Pierre Rouzic of Kerlois died, I saw a light of all colours between heaven and earth, the very night of his death. I have seen a woman asleep whose spirit must have been free, for I saw it hovering outside her body. She was not awakened [at the time] for fear that the spirit would not find its body again.’ In answer to my question as to how long these various visions usually lasted, Madame Le Port said:—‘They lasted about a quarter of an hour, or less, and all of them disappeared instantaneously.’ As Madame Le Port now seemed unable to recall more of her visions, I finally asked her what she thought about *corrigans*, and she replied:—‘I believe they exist as some special kind of spirits, though I have never seen any.’

*Proof that the Dead Exist.*—This is what M. Jean Couton, an old Breton, told me at Carnac:—‘I am only an old peasant, without instruction, without any education, but let me tell you what I think concerning the dead. Following my own idea, I believe that after death the soul always exists and travels among us. I repeat to you that I have belief that the dead are seen; I am now going to prove this to you in the following story:—

‘One winter evening I was returning home from a funeral. I had as companion a kinswoman of the man just buried. We took the train and soon alighted in the station of Plouharnel. We still had three kilometres to go before reaching home, and as it was winter, and at that epoch there was no stage-coach, we were obliged to travel afoot. As we were going along,

suddenly there appeared to my companion her dead relative whom we had buried that day. She asked me if I saw anything, and since I replied to her negatively she said to me, "Touch me, and you will see without doubt." I touched her, and I saw the same as she did, the person just dead, whom I clearly recognized.'<sup>101</sup>

*Phantom Washerwomen.*—Concerning a very popular Breton belief in phantom washerwomen (*les lavandières de nuits*; or in Breton, *cannered noz*), M. Goulven Le Scour offers the following summary:—'The *lavandières de nuits* were heard less often than the *corrigans*, but were much more feared. It was usually towards midnight that they were heard beating their linen in front of different washing-places, always some way from the villages. According to the old folk of the past generation, when the phantom washerwomen would ask a certain passer-by to help them to wring sheets, he could not refuse, under pain of being stopped and wrung like a sheet himself. And it was necessary for those who aided in wringing the sheets to turn in the same direction as the washerwomen; for if by misfortune the assistant turned in an opposite direction, he had his arms wrung in an instant. It is believed that these phantom washerwomen are women condemned to wash their mortuary sheets during whole centuries; but that when they find some mortal to wring in an opposite direction, they are delivered.'<sup>102</sup>

*Breton Animistic Beliefs.*—M. Z. Le Rouzic, a Breton Celt who has spent most of his life studying the archaeology and folk-lore of the Morbihan, and who is at present Keeper of the Miln Museum at Carnac, summarizes for us the state of popular beliefs as he finds them existing in the Carnac country now:—'There are few traditions concerning the *fées* in the region of Carnac; but the belief in spirits, good and bad—which seems to me to be the same as the belief in *fées*—is general and profound, as well as the belief in the incarnation of spirits. And I am convinced that these beliefs are the reminiscences of ancient Celtic beliefs held by the Druids and conserved by Christianity.'

In Finistère, as purely Breton as the Morbihan, I found the Legend of the Dead just as widespread, and the belief in spirits and the apparitional

return of the dead quite as profound; but nothing worth recording concerning fairies. The stories which follow were told to me by M. Pierre Vichon, a pure Breton Celt, born at Lescoff, near the Pointe du Raz, Finistère, in 1842. Peter is a genuine old 'sea-dog', having made the tour of the globe, and yet he has not lost the innate faith of his ancient ancestors in a world invisible; for though he says he cannot believe all that the people in his part of Finistère tell about spirits and ghosts, he must have a belief that the dead as spirits exist and influence the living, because of his own personal experience—one of the most remarkable of its kind. Peter speaks Breton, French, and English fluently, and since he had an opportunity for the first time in seventeen months of using English, he told me the stories in my own native language:—

*Pierre Vichon's Strange Experience.*—'Some forty years ago a strange thing happened in my life. A relative of mine had taken service in the Austrian army, for by profession he was a soldier, though at first he had begun to study for the priesthood. During the progress of the war I had no news from him; and, then one day while I was on the deck of a Norwegian ship just off Dover (England), my fellow sailors heard a noise as though of a gun being discharged, and the whirr of a shot. At the same moment I fell down on the deck as though mortally wounded, and lay in an unconscious state for two hours. When the news came, it was ascertained that at the very moment I fell and the gun-report was heard, my relative in Austria had been shot in the head and fell down dead. And he had been seen to throw his hands up to his head to grasp it just as I did.'

*An Apparition of the Dead.*—'I had another relative who died in a hospital near Christiania, Norway; and on the day he died a sister of mine, then a little girl, saw his spirit appear here in Lescoff, and she easily recognized it; but none of her girl companions with her at the time saw the spirit. After a few days we had the news of the death, and the time of it and the time of my sister's seeing the spirit coincided exactly.'

In all the peninsula of which the famous and dangerous Pointe du Raz is the terminus, similar stories are current. And among the fisher-folk with

whom I lived on the strange and historic Île de Sein, the Legend of the Dead is even more common.

*The Dead and Fairies Compared.*—Without setting down here in detail numerous other death-legends which we have collected, we may now note how much the same are the powers and nature of the dead and spirits in Brittany, and the power and nature of the fairy races in Celtic Britain and Ireland. Thus the Breton dead strike down the living just as fairies are said to do; the *Ankou*,<sup>103</sup> who is a king of the dead, and his subjects, like a fairy king and fairies, have their own particular paths or roads over which they travel in great sacred processions;<sup>104</sup> and exactly as fairies, the hosts of the dead are in possession of the earth on November Eve, and the living are expected to prepare a feast and entertainment for them of curded-milk, hot pancakes, and cider, served on the family table covered with a fresh white table-cloth, and to supply music. The Breton dead come to enjoy this hospitality of their friends; and as they take their places at the table the stools are heard to move, and sometimes the plates; and the musicians who help to entertain them think that at times they feel the cold breath of the invisible visitors. Concerning this same feast of the dead (*La Toussaint*) Villemarqu  in his *Barzaz Breiz* (p. 507) records that in many parts of Brittany libations of milk are poured over or near ancestral tombs—just as in Ireland and Scotland libations of milk are poured to fairies. And the people of Armorica at other times than November Eve remember the dead very appropriately, as in Ireland the Irish remember fairies. The Breton peasant thinks of the dead as frequently as the Irishman thinks of fairies. One day while I was walking toward Carnac there was told to me in the most ordinary manner a story about a dead man who used to be seen going along the very road I was on. He quite often went to the church in Carnac seeking prayers for his soul. And almost every man or woman one meets in rural Lower Brittany can tell many similar stories. If a mortal should happen to meet one of the dead in Brittany and be induced to eat food which the dead sometimes offer, he will never be able to return among the living,<sup>105</sup> for the effect would be the same as eating fairy-food. Like ghosts and fairies in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, in Brittany the dead guard

hidden treasure. It is after sunset that the dead have most power to strike down the living,<sup>105</sup> and to *take* them just as fairies do. A natural phenomenon, a malady, a death, or a tempest may be the work of a spirit in Brittany,<sup>105</sup> and in Ireland the work of a fairy. The Breton dead, like the Scotch fairies described in Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth*, are capable of making themselves visible or invisible to mortals, at will.<sup>105</sup> Their bodies—for they have bodies—are material,<sup>105</sup> being composed of matter in a state unknown to us; and the bodies of daemons as described by the Ancients are made of congealed air. The dead in Brittany have forms more slender and smaller in stature than those of the living,<sup>105</sup> and herein we find one of the factors which supporters of the Pygmy Theory would emphasize, but it is thoroughly psychical. Old Breton farmers after death return to their farms, as though come from Fairyland; and sometimes they even take a turn at the ploughing.<sup>105</sup> As in Ireland, so in Brittany, the day belongs to the living, and the night, when a mortal is safer indoors than out, to spirits and the dead.<sup>105</sup> The Bretons take great care not to counterfeit the dead nor to speak slightly of them,<sup>106</sup> for, like fairies, they know all that is done by mortals, and can hear all that is said about them, and can take revenge. Just as in the case of all fairies and goblins, the dead disappear at first cock-crow.<sup>107</sup> The world of the dead, like the land of Faerie or the Otherworld, may be underground, in the air, in a hill or mountain like a fairy palace, under a river or sea, and even on an island out amid the ocean.<sup>107</sup> As other Celts do against evil spirits and fairies, the Breton peasants use magic against evil souls of the dead,<sup>108</sup> and the priests use exorcisms. The Breton realm of the dead equally with the Irish Fairyland is an invisible world peopled by other kinds of spirits besides disembodied mortals and fairies.<sup>109</sup> The dead haunt houses just as Robin Good-fellows and brownies, or pixies and goblins, generally do. The dead are fond of frequenting cross-roads, and so are all sorts of fairies. In Brittany one must always guard against the evil dead, in Cornwall against pixies, in other Celtic lands against different kinds of fairies. In Ireland and Scotland there is the banshee, in Wales the death-candle, in Brittany the *Ankou* or king of the

dead, to foretell a death. And as the banshee wails before the ancestral mansion, so the *Ankou* sounds its doleful cry before the door of the one it calls.<sup>109</sup> There seems not to be a family in the Carnac region of the Morbihan without some tradition of a warning coming before the death of one of its members. In Ireland only certain families have a banshee, but in Brittany all families. Professor Le Braz has devoted a large part of his work on *La Légende de la Mort* to these Breton death-warnings or *intersignes*. They may be shades of the dead under many aspects—ghostly hands, or ghosts of inanimate objects. They may come by the fall of objects without known cause; by a magpie resting on a roof—just as in Ireland; by the crowing of cocks, and the howling of dogs at night. They may be death-candles or torches, dreams, peculiar bodily sensations, images in water, phantom funerals, and death-chariots or death-coaches as in Wales.

The Bretons may be said to have a Death-Faith, whereas the other Celts have a Fairy-Faith, and both are a real folk-religion innate in the Celtic nature, and thus quite as influential as Christianity. Should Christianity in some way suddenly be swept away from the Celt he would still be religious, for it is his nature to be so. And as Professor Le Braz has suggested to me, Carnac with its strange monuments of an unknown people and time, and wrapped in its air of mystery and silence, is a veritable Land of the Dead. I, too, have felt that there are strange, vague, indefinable influences at work at Carnac at all times of the day and night, very similar to those which I have felt in the most fairy-haunted regions of Ireland. We might say that all of Brittany is a Land of the Dead, and ancient Carnac its Centre, just as Ireland is Fairyland, with its Centre at ancient Tara.

## Conclusion

We can very appropriately conclude our inquiry about Brittany with a very beautiful description of a *Veillée* in Lower Brittany, written down in French for our special use by the Breton poet, M. Le Scour, of Carnac, and here translated. M. Le Scour draws the whole picture from life, and from his

own intimate experience. It will serve to give us some insight into the natural literary ability of the Breton Celts, to illustrate their love of tales dealing with the marvellous and the supernatural, and is especially valuable for showing the social environment amidst which the Fairy-Faith of Lower Brittany lives and flourishes, isolated from foreign interference:—

*A 'Veillée'*<sup>110</sup> *in Lower Brittany.*—‘The wind was blowing from the east, and in the intermittent moonlight the roof of the thatched cottage already gleamed with a thin covering of snow which had fallen since sunset. Each comer reached on the run the comfortable bakehouse, wherein Alain Corre was at work kneading his batch of barley bread; and the father Le Scour was never the last to arrive, because he liked to get the best seat in front of the bake-oven.

‘Victor had promised us for that night a pretty story which no person had ever heard before. I was not more than fourteen years old then, but like all the neighbours I hurried to get a place in order to hear Victor. My mother was already there, making her distaff whirr between her two fingers as she sat in the light of a rosin candle, and my brother Yvon was finishing a wooden butter-spoon. Every few minutes I and my little cousin went out to see if it was still snowing, and if Victor had arrived.

‘At last Victor entered, and everybody applauded, the young girls lengthening out their distaffs to do him reverence. Then when silence was restored, after some of the older men had several times shouted out, “Let us commence; hold your tongues,” Victor began his story as follows:—

“‘Formerly, in the village of Kastel-Laer, Plouneventer (Finistère), there were two neighbours; the one was Paol al Ludu and the other Yon Rustik. Paol al Ludu was a good-for-nothing sort of fellow; he gained his living easily, by cheating everybody and by robbing his neighbours; and being always well dressed he was much envied by his poorer acquaintances. Yon Rustik, on the contrary, was a poor, infirm, and honest man, always seeking to do good, but not being able to work, had to beg.

“‘One evening our two men were disputing. Paol al Ludu treated Yon shamefully, telling him that it would be absurd to think an old lame man such as he was could ever get to Paris; ‘But I,’ added Paol, ‘am going to see

the capital and amuse myself like a rich *bourgeois*.' At this, Yon offered to bet with Paol that in spite of infirmities he would also go to Paris; and being an honest man he placed his trust in God. The wager was mutually agreed to, and our two men set out for Paris by different routes.

“Paol al Ludu, who had no infirmities, arrived at Paris within three weeks. He followed the career of a thief, and deceived everybody; and as he was well dressed, people had confidence in him. The poor Yon Rustik, on the contrary, did not travel rapidly. He was obliged to beg his way, and being meanly dressed was compelled to sleep outdoors when he could not find a stable. At the end of a month he arrived in a big forest in the region of Versailles, and having no other shelter for the night chose a great oak tree which was hollowed by the centuries and lined with fungi within. In front of this ancient oak there was a fountain which must have been miraculous, for it flowed from east to west, and Yon had closely observed it.

“Towards midnight Yon was awakened by a terrible uproar; there were a hundred *corrigans* dancing round the fountain. He overheard one of them say to the others: ‘I have news to report to you; I have cast an evil spell upon the daughter of the King, and no mortal will ever be able to cure her, and yet in order to cure her nothing more would be needed than a drop of water from this fountain.’ The *corrigan* who thus spoke was upon two sticks<sup>111</sup> (crippled), and commanded all the others. The beggar having understood the conversation, awaited impatiently the departure of the *corrigans*. When they were gone, he took a little water from the fountain in a bottle, and hurried on to Paris, where he arrived one fine morning.

“In the house where Yon stopped to eat his crust of dry bread he heard it reported that the daughter of the King was very ill, and that the wisest doctors in France had been sent for. Three days later, Yon Rustik presented himself at the palace, and asked audience with the King, but as he was so shabbily dressed the attendants did not wish to let him enter. When he strongly insisted, they finally prevailed upon the King to receive him; and then Yon told the King that he had come to cure the princess. Thereupon the King caused Yon to be fittingly dressed and presented before the sick-bed; and Yon drew forth his bottle of water, and, at his request, the princess



drank it to the last drop. Suddenly she began to laugh with joy, and throwing her arms about the neck of the beggar thanked him: she was radically cured. At once the King gave orders that his golden coach of state be made ready; and placing the princess and the beggar on one seat, made a tour throughout all the most beautiful streets of Paris. Never before were such crowds seen in Paris, for the proclamation had gone forth that the one who had made the miraculous cure was a beggar.

“Paol al Ludu, who was still in Paris, pressed forward to see the royal coach pass, and when he saw who sat next to the princess he was beside himself with rage. But before the day was over he discovered Yon in the great hotel of the city, and asked him how it was that he had been able to effect the cure; and Yon replied to his old rival that it was with the water of a miraculous fountain, and relating everything which had passed, explained to him in what place the hollow oak and the fountain were to be found.

“Paol did not wait even that night, but set off at once to find the miraculous fountain. When he finally found it the hour was almost midnight, and so he hid himself in the hollow of the oak, hoping to overhear some mysterious revelation. Midnight had hardly come when a frightful uproar commenced: this time the crippled *corrigan* chief was swearing like a demon, and he cried to the others, ‘The daughter of the King has been cured by a beggar! He must have overheard us by hiding in the hollow of that d——d old oak. Quick! let fire be put in it, for it has brought us misfortune.’

“In less than a minute, the trunk of the oak was in flames; and there were heard the cries of anguish of Paol al Ludu and the gnashing of his teeth, as he fought against death. Thus the evil and dishonest man ended his life, while Yon Rustik received a pension of twenty thousand francs, and was able to live happy for many years, and to give alms to the poor.”

Here M. Le Scour ends his narrative, leaving the reader to imagine the enthusiastic applause and fond embraces bestowed upon Victor for this most marvellous story, by the happy gathering of country-folk in that cosy warm bakehouse in Lower Brittany, while without the cold east wind of winter was whirling into every nook and corner the falling flakes of snow.

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The evidence from Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany, which the living Celtic Fairy-Faith offers, has now been heard; and, as was stated at the beginning of the inquiry, apparently most of it can only be interpreted as belonging to a world-wide doctrine of souls. But before this decision can be arrived at safely, all the evidence should be carefully estimated according to anthropological and psychological methods; and this we shall proceed to do in the following chapter, before passing to Section II of our study.

## **Chapter III**

### **An Anthropological Examination of the Evidence**

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Anthropology is concerned with man and what is in man—  
*humani nihil a se alienum putat.*—Andrew Lang.

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### **The Celtic Fairy-Faith as Part of a World-wide Animism**

The modern belief in fairies, with which until now we have been specifically concerned, is Celtic only in so far as it reflects Celtic traditions and customs, Celtic myth and religion, and Celtic social and environmental conditions. Otherwise, as will be shown throughout this and succeeding chapters, it is in essence a part of a world-wide animism, which forms the background of all religions in whatever stage of culture religions exist or to which they have attained by evolution, from the barbarism of the Congo black man to the civilization of the Archbishop of Canterbury; and as far back as we can go into human origins there is some corresponding belief in a fairy or spirit realm, as there is to-day among contemporary civilized and uncivilized races of all countries. We may therefore very profitably begin our examination of the living Fairy-Faith of the Celts by comparing it with a few examples, taken almost at random, from the animistic beliefs current among non-Celtic peoples.

To the Arunta tribes of Central Australia, furthest removed in space from the Celts and hence least likely to have been influenced by them, let us go first, in order to examine their doctrine of ancestral *Alcheringa* beings and of the *Iruntarinia*, which offers an almost complete parallel to the Celtic belief in fairies. These *Alcheringa* beings and *Iruntarinia*—to ignore the secondary differences between the two—are a spirit race inhabiting an invisible or fairy world. Only certain persons, medicine-men and seers, can see them; and these describe them as thin and shadowy, and, like the Irish *Sidhe*, as always youthful in appearance. Precisely like their Celtic counterparts in general, these Australian spirits are believed to haunt inanimate objects such as stones and trees; or to frequent totem centres, as in Ireland demons (daemons) are believed to frequent certain places known to have been anciently dedicated to the religious rites of the pre-Christian Celts; and, quite after the manner of the Breton dead and of most fairies, they are said to control human affairs and natural phenomena. All the Arunta invariably regard themselves as incarnations or reincarnations of these ancestral spirit-beings; and, in accordance with evidence to be set forth in our seventh chapter, ancient and modern Celts have likewise regarded themselves as incarnations or reincarnations of ancestors and of

fairy beings. Also the Arunta think of the *Alcheringa* beings exactly as Celts think of fairies: as real invisible entities who must be propitiated if men wish to secure their goodwill; and as beneficent and protecting beings when not offended, who may attach themselves to individuals as guardian spirits.<sup>112</sup>

Among the Melanesian peoples there is an equally firm faith in spiritual beings, which they call *Vui* and *Wui*, and these beings have very many of the chief attributes of the *Alcheringa* beings.<sup>113</sup>

In Africa, the *Amatongo*, or *Abapansi* of Amazulu belief, have essentially the same motives for action toward men and women, and exhibit the same powers, as the Scotch and Irish peasants assign to the ‘good people’. They *take* the living through death; and people so *taken* appear afterwards as apparitions, having become *Amatongo*.<sup>114</sup>

In the New World, we find in the North American Red Men a race as much given as the Celts are to a belief in various spirits like fairies. They believe that there are spirits in lakes, in rivers and in waterfalls, in rocks and trees, in the earth and in the air; and that these beings produce storms, droughts, good and bad harvests, abundance and scarcity of game, disease, and the varying fortunes of men. Mr. Leland, who has carefully studied these American beliefs, says that the *Un à games-suk*, or little spirits inhabiting rocks and streams, play a much more influential part in the social and religious life of the North American Red Men than elves or fairies ever did among the Aryans.<sup>115</sup>

In Asia there is the well-known and elaborate animistic creed of the Chinese and of the Japanese, to be in part illustrated in subsequent sections. In popular Indian belief, as found in the Panjab, there is no essential difference between various orders of beings endowed with immortality, such as ghosts and spirits on the one hand, and gods, demi-gods, and warriors on the other; for whether in bodies in this world or out of bodies in the invisible world, they equally live and act—quite as fairies do.<sup>116</sup> Throughout the Malay Peninsula, belief in many orders of good and bad spirits, in demon-possession, in exorcism, and in the power of black magicians is very common.<sup>117</sup> But in the *Phi* races of Siam we discover

what is probably the most important and complete parallel to the Celtic Fairy-Faith existing in Asia.

According to the Siamese folk-belief, all the stars and various planets, as well as the ethereal spaces, are the dwelling-places of the *Thévadas*, gods and goddesses of the old pre-Buddhist mythology, who correspond pretty closely to the Tuatha De Danann of Irish mythology; and this world itself is peopled by legions of minor deities called *Phi*, who include all the various orders of good and bad spirits continually influencing mankind. Some of these *Phi* live in forests, in trees, in open spaces; and watercourses are full of them. Others inhabit mountains and high places. A particular order who haunt the sacred trees surrounding the Buddhist temples are known as *Phi nang mai*; and since *nang* is the word for female, and *mai* for tree, they are comparable to tree-dwelling fairies, or Greek wood-nymphs. Still another order called *Chao phum phi* (gods of the earth) are like house-frequenting brownies, fairies, and pixies, or like certain orders of *corrigans* who haunt barns, stables, and dwellings; and in many curious details these *Chao phum phi* correspond to the Penates of ancient Rome. Not only is the worship of this order of *Phi* widespread in Siam, but to every other order of *Phi* altars are erected and propitiatory offerings made by all classes of the Siamese people.<sup>118</sup>

Before passing westwards to Europe, in completion of our rapid folklore tour of the world, we may observe that the Persians, even those who are well educated, have a firm belief in *jinns* and *afreets*, different orders of good and bad spirits with all the chief characteristics of fairies.<sup>119</sup> And modern Arabs and Egyptians and Egyptian Turks hold similar animistic beliefs.<sup>120</sup>

In Europe, the Greek peasant as firmly believes in nymphs or nereids as the Celtic peasant believes in fairies; and nymphs, nereids, and fairies alike are often the survivals of an ancient mythology. Mr. J. C. Lawson, who has very carefully investigated the folk-lore of modern Greece, says: ‘The nereids are conceived as women half-divine yet not immortal, always young, always beautiful, capricious at best, and at their worst cruel. Their presence is suspected everywhere. I myself had a nereid pointed out to me

by my guide, and there certainly was the semblance of a female figure draped in white, and tall beyond human stature, flitting in the dusk between the gnarled and twisted boles of an old olive-yard. What the apparition was, I had no leisure to investigate; for my guide with many signs of the cross and muttered invocations of the Virgin urged my mule to perilous haste along the rough mountain path.’ Like Celtic fairies, these Greek nereids have their queens; they dance all night, disappearing at cock-crow; they can cast spells on animals or maladies on men and women; they can shift their shape; they *take* children in death and make changelings; and they fall in love with young men.<sup>121</sup>

Among the Roumain peoples the widespread belief in the *Iele* shows in other ways equally marked parallels with the Fairy-Faith of the Celts. These *Iele* wait at cross-roads and near dwellings, or at village fountains or in fields and woods, where they can best cast on men and women various maladies. Sometimes they fall in love with beautiful young men and women, and have on such occasions even been controlled by their mortal lovers. They are extremely fond of music and dancing, and many a shepherd with his pipes has been favoured by them, though they have their own music and songs too. The Albanian peoples have evil fairies, no taller than children twelve years old, called in Modern Greek τὰ ἔξωτικά, ‘those without,’ who correspond to the *Iele*. Young people who have been enticed to enter their round dance afterwards waste away and die, apparently becoming one of ‘those without’. These Albanian spirits, like the ‘good people’ and the Breton dead, have their own particular paths and retreats, and whoever violates these is struck and falls ill.<sup>122</sup> These parallels from Roumain lands are probably due to the close Aryan relationship between the Roumains, the Greeks, and the Celts. The *Iele* seem nothing more than the nymphs and nereids of classical antiquity transformed under Christian influence into beings who contradict their original good character, as in Celtic lands the fairy-folk have likewise come to be fallen angels and evil spirits.

There is an even closer relationship between the Italian and Celtic fairies. For example, among the Etruscan-Roman people there are now

flourishing animistic beliefs almost identical in all details with the Fairy-Faith of the Celts.<sup>123</sup> In a very valuable study on the Neo-Latin Fay, Mr. H. C. Coote writes:—‘Who were the Fays—the *fate* of later Italy, the *fées* of mediaeval France? For it is perfectly clear that the *fatua*, *fata*, and *fée* are all one and the same word.’ And he proceeds to show that the race of immortal damsels whom the old natives of Italy called *Fatuae* gave origin to all the family of *fées* as these appear in Latin countries, and that the Italians recognized in the Greek nymphs their own *Fatuae*.<sup>124</sup>

It is quite evident that we have here discovered in Italy, as we discovered in Greece and Roumain lands, fairies very Celtic in character; and should further examination be made of modern European folk-lore yet other similar fairies would be found, such, for example, as the elves of Germany and of Scandinavia, or as the *servans* of the Swiss peasant. And in all cases, whether the beliefs examined be Celtic or non-Celtic, Aryan or non-Aryan, from Australia, Polynesia, Africa, America, Asia, or Europe, they are in essence animistically the same, as later sections in this chapter will make clear. But while the parallelism of these beliefs is indicated it is, of course, not meant for a moment that in all of the cases or in any one of the cases the specific differences are not considerable. The ground of comparison consists simply in those generic characteristics which these fairy-faiths, as they may be called, invariably display—characteristics which we have good precedent for summing up in the single adjective animistic.

### **Shaping Influence of Social Psychology**

For the term animism we have to thank Dr. E. B. Tylor, whose *Primitive Culture*, in which the animistic theory is developed, may almost be said to mark the beginning of scientific anthropology. In this work, however, there is a decided tendency (which indeed displays itself in most of the leading anthropological works, as, for example, in those by Dr. Frazer) to regard men, or at any rate primitive men, as having a mind absolutely

homogeneous, and therefore as thinking, feeling, and acting in the same way under all conditions alike. But a decided change is beginning to manifest itself in the interpretation of the customs and beliefs of the ruder races. It is assumed as a working principle that each ethnic group has or tends to have an individuality of its own, and, moreover, that the members of such a group think, feel, and act primarily as the representatives, so to speak, of that ethnic individuality in which they live, move, and have their being. That is to say, a social as contrasted with an individual psychology must, it is held, pronounce both the first and last word regarding all matters of mythology, religion, and art in its numerous forms. The reason is that these are social products, and as such are to be understood only in the light of the laws governing the workings of the collective mind of any particular ethnic group. Such a method is, for instance, employed in Mr. William McDougall's *Social Psychology*, in Mr. R. R. Marett's *Threshold of Religion*, and in many anthropological articles to be found in *L'Année Sociologique*.

If, therefore, we hold by this new and fruitful method of social psychology we must be prepared to treat the Fairy-Faith of the Celtic peoples also in and for itself, as expressive of an individuality more or less unique. It might, indeed, be objected that these peoples are not a single social group, but rather a number of such groups, and this is, in a way, true. Nevertheless their folk-lore displays such remarkable homogeneity, from whatever quarter of the Celtic world it be derived, that it seems the soundest method to treat them as one people for all the purposes of the student of sociology, mythology, and religion. Granting, then, such a unity in the beliefs of the pan-Celtic race, we are finally obliged to distinguish as it were two aspects thereof.

On the one hand there is shown, even in the mere handful of non-Celtic parallels, which for reasons of space we have been content to cite, as well as in their Celtic equivalents, a generic element common to all peoples living under primitive conditions of society. It is emphatically a social element, but at the same time one which any primitive society is bound to display. On the other hand, in a second aspect, the Celtic beliefs show of



themselves a character which is wholly Celtic: in the Fairy-Faith, which is generically animistic, we find reflected all sorts of specific characteristics of the Celtic peoples—their patriotism, their peculiar type of imagination, their costumes, amusements, household life, and social and religious customs generally. With this fact in mind, we may proceed to examine certain of the more specialized aspects of the Fairy-Faith, as manifested both among Celts and elsewhere.

## **The Smallness of Elvish Spirits and Fairies**

### **Ethnological or Pygmy Theory**

In any anthropological estimate of the Fairy-Faith, the pygmy stature so commonly attributed to various orders of Celtic and of non-Celtic fairies should be considered. Various scholarly champions of the Pygmy Theory have attempted to explain this smallness of fairies by means of the hypothesis that the belief in such fairies is due *wholly* to a folk-memory of small-statured pre-Celtic races;<sup>125</sup> and they add that these races, having dwelt in caverns like the prehistoric Cave Men, and in underground houses like those of Lapps or Eskimos, gave rise to the belief in a fairy world existing in caverns and under hills or mountains. When analysed, our evidence shows that in the majority of cases witnesses have regarded fairies either as non-human nature-spirits or else as spirits of the dead; that in a comparatively limited number of cases they have regarded them as the souls of prehistoric races; and that occasionally they have regarded the belief in them as due to a folk-memory of such races. It follows, then, from such an analysis of evidence, that the Pygmy Theory probably does explain some ethnological elements which have come to be almost inseparably interwoven with the essentially animistic fabric of the primitive Fairy-Faith. But though the theory may so account for such ethnological elements, it disregards the animism that has made such interweaving possible; and, on the whole, we are inclined to accept Mr. Jenner's view of the theory (see p.

169). Since the Pygmy Theory thus fails entirely to provide a basis for what is by far the most important part of the Fairy-Faith, a more adequate theory is required.

### **Animistic Theory**

The testimony of Celtic literature goes to show that leprechauns and similar dwarfish beings are not due to a folk-memory of a real pygmy race, that they are spirits like elves, and that the folk-memory of a Lappish-like people (who may have been Picts) evidently was confused with them, so as to result in their being anthropomorphosed. Thus, in *Fionn's Ransom*, there is reference to an under-sized apparently Lappish-like man, who may be a Pict; and as Campbell, who records the ancient tale, has observed, there are many similar traditional Highland tales about little men or even about true dwarfs who are good bowmen;<sup>126</sup> but it is very certain that such tales have often blended with other tales, in which supernatural figures like fairies play a rôle; and, apparently, the former kind of tales are much more historical and modern in their origin, while the latter are more mythological and extremely archaic. This blending of the natural or ethnological and the supernatural—in quite the same manner as in the modern Fairy-Faith—is clearly seen in another of Campbell's collected tales, *The Lad with the Skin Coverings*,<sup>127</sup> which in essence is an otherworld tale: 'a little thickset man in a russet coat,' who is a magician, but who otherwise seems to be a genuine Lapp dressed in furs, is introduced into a story where real fairy-like beings play the chief parts. Again, in Irish literature, we read of a *loch luchra* or 'lake of the pygmies'.<sup>128</sup> Light is thrown upon this reference by what is recorded about the leprechauns and Fergus:—While asleep on the seashore one day, Fergus was about to be carried off by the *luchorpáin*; 'whereat he awoke and caught three of them, to wit, one in each of his two hands, and one on his breast. "Life for life" (i.e. protection), say they. "Let my three wishes (i.e. choices) be given," says Fergus. "Thou shalt have," says the dwarf, "save that which is impossible for us." Fergus requested of

him knowledge of passing under loughs and linns and seas. “Thou shalt have,” says the dwarf, “save one which I forbid to thee: thou shalt not go under Lough Rudraide [which] is in thine own country.” Thereafter the *luchuirp* (little bodies) put herbs into his ears, and he used to go with them under seas. Others say the dwarf gave his cloak to him, and that Fergus used to put it on his head and thus go under seas.’<sup>129</sup> In an etymological comment on this passage, Sir John Rhÿs says:—“The words *luchuirp* and *luchorpáin* [Anglo-Irish leprechaun] appear to mean literally “small bodies”, and the word here rendered *dwarf* is in the Irish *abac*, the etymological equivalent of the Welsh *avanc*, the name by which certain water inhabitants of a mythic nature went in Welsh....’<sup>130</sup>

Besides what we find in the recorded Fairy-Faith, there are very many parallel traditions, both Celtic and non-Celtic, about various classes of spirits, like leprechauns or other small elvish beings, which Dr. Tylor has called nature-spirits;<sup>131</sup> and apparently all of these can best be accounted for by means of the animistic hypothesis. For example, in North America (as in Celtic lands) there is no proof of there ever having been an actual dwarf race, but Lewis and Clark, in their *Travels to the Source of the Missouri River*, found among the Sioux a tradition that a hill near the Whitestone River, which the Red Men called the ‘Mountain of Little People’ or ‘Little Spirits’, was inhabited by pygmy demons in human form, about eighteen inches tall, armed with sharp arrows, and ever on the alert to kill mortals who should dare to invade their domain. So afraid were all the tribes of Red Men who lived near the mountain of these little spirits that no one of them could be induced to visit it.<sup>132</sup> And we may compare this American spirit-haunted hill with similar natural hills in Scotland said to be fairy knolls: one near the turning of a road from Reay Wick to Safester, Isle of Unst;<sup>133</sup> one the well-known fairy-haunted Tomnahurich, near Inverness;<sup>133</sup> and a third, the hill at Aberfoyle on which the ‘people of peace’ took the Rev. Robert Kirk when he profaned it by walking on it; or we may equate the American hill with the fairy-haunted Slieve Gullion and Ben Bulbin in Ireland.

The Iroquois had a belief that they could summon dwarfs, who were similar nature-spirits, by knocking on a certain large stone.<sup>134</sup> Likewise the Polong, a Malay familiar spirit, is ‘an exceedingly diminutive female figure or mannikin’.<sup>135</sup> East Indian nature-spirits, too, are pygmies in stature.<sup>136</sup> In Polynesia, entirely independent of the common legends about wild races of pygmy stature, are myths about the spirits called *wui* or *vui*, who correspond to European dwarfs and trolls. These little spirits seem to occupy the same position toward the Melanesian gods or culture heroes, Qat of the Banks Islands and Tagaro of the New Hebrides, as daemons toward Greek gods, or as good angels toward the Christian Trinity, or as fairy tribes toward the Brythonic Arthur and toward the Gaelic hero Cuchulainn.<sup>137</sup> Similarly in Hindu mythology pygmies hold an important place, being sculptured on most temples in company with the gods; e.g. Siva is accompanied by a bodyguard of dwarfs, and one of them, the three-legged Bhiringi, is a good dancer<sup>138</sup>—like all *corrigans*, pixies, and most fairies.

Beyond the borders of Celtic lands—in Southern Asia with its islands, in Melanesia with New Guinea, and in Central Africa—pygmy races, generally called Negritos, exist at the present day; but they themselves have a fairy-faith, just as their normal-sized primitive neighbours have, and it would hardly be reasonable to argue that either of the two fairy-faiths is due to a folk-memory of small-statured peoples. Ancient and thoroughly reliable manuscript records testify to the existence of pygmies in China during the twenty-third century BC,<sup>139</sup> yet no one has ever tried to explain the well-known animistic beliefs of modern Chinamen in ghosts, demons, and in little nature-spirits like fairies, by saying that these are a folk-memory of this ancient pygmy race. In Yezo and the Kurile Islands of Japan still survive a few of the hairy Ainu, a Caucasian-like, under-sized race; and their immediate predecessors, whom they exterminated, were a Negrito race, who, according to some traditions, were two to three feet in stature, and, according to other traditions, only one inch in stature.<sup>140</sup> Both pygmy races, the surviving and the exterminated race, seem independently to have evolved a belief in ghosts and spirits, so that here again it need not be

argued that the present pre-Buddhist animism of the Japanese is due to a folk-memory of either Ainus or Negritos.

Further examination of the animistic hypothesis designed to explain the smallness of elvish spirits leads away from mere mythology into psychology, and sets us the task of finding out if, after all, primitive ideas about the disembodied human soul may not have originated or at least have helped to shape the Celtic folk conception of fairies as small-statured beings. Mr. A. E. Crawley, in his *Idea of the Soul* (pp. 200–1, 206), shows by carefully selected evidence from ancient and modern psychologies that ‘first among the attributes of the soul in its primary form may be placed its size’, and that ‘in the majority of cases it is a miniature replica of the person, described often as a mannikin, or homunculus, of a few inches in height’. Sometimes the soul is described as only about three inches in stature. Dr. Frazer shows, likewise, that by practically all contemporary primitive peoples the soul is commonly regarded as a dwarf.<sup>141</sup>

The same opinions regarding the human soul prevailed among ancient peoples highly civilized, i.e. the Egyptians and Greeks, and may have thence directly influenced Celtic tradition. Thus, in bas-relief on the Egyptian temple of *Dêr el Bahri*, Queen Hatshepsû Rāmaka is making offerings of perfume to the gods, while just behind her stands her *Ka* (soul) as a pygmy so little that the crown of its head is just on a level with her waist.<sup>142</sup> The *Ka* is usually represented as about half the size of an ordinary man. In the *Book of the Dead*, the *Ba*, which like the *Ka* is one of the many separable parts of the soul, is represented as a very little man with wings and bird-like body.

On Greek vases the human soul is depicted as a pygmy issuing from the body through the mouth; and this conception existed among Romans and Teutons.<sup>143</sup> Like their predecessors the Egyptians, the Greeks also often represented the soul as a small winged human figure, and Romans, in turn, imagined the soul as a pygmy with butterfly wings. These ideas reappear in mediaeval reliefs and pictures wherein the soul is shown as a child or little naked man going out of the dying person’s mouth;<sup>144</sup> and, according to

Cædmon, who was educated by Celtic teachers, angels are small and beautiful<sup>145</sup>—quite like good fairies.

### **Alchemical and Mystical Theory**

In the positive doctrines of mediaeval alchemists and mystics, e.g. Paracelsus and the Rosicrucians, as well as their modern followers, the ancient metaphysical ideas of Egypt, Greece, and Rome find a new expression; and these doctrines raise the final problem—if there are any scientific grounds for believing in such pygmy nature-spirits as these remarkable thinkers of the Middle Ages claim to have studied as beings actually existing in nature. To some extent this interesting problem will be examined in our chapter entitled *Science and Fairies*; here we shall simply outline the metaphysical theory, adding the testimony of some of its living advocates to explain the smallness of elvish spirits and fairies.

These mediaeval metaphysicians, inheritors of pre-Platonic, Platonic, and neo-Platonic teachings, purposely obscured their doctrines under a covering of alchemical terms, so as to safeguard themselves against persecution, open discussion of occultism not being safe during the Middle Ages, as it was among the ancients and happily is now again in our own generation. But they were quite scientific in their methods, for they divided all invisible beings into four distinct classes: the Angels, who in character and function are parallel to the gods of the ancients, and equal to the Tuatha De Danann of the Irish, are the highest; below them are the Devils or Demons, who correspond to the fallen angels of Christianity; the third class includes all Elementals, sub-human Nature-Spirits, who are generally regarded as having pygmy stature, like the Greek daemons; and the fourth division comprises the Souls of the Dead, and the shades or ghosts of the dead.

For us, the third class, which includes spirits of pygmy-like form, is the most important in this present discussion. All its members are of four kinds, according as they inhabit one of the four chief elements of nature.<sup>146</sup> Those

inhabiting the earth are called Gnomes. They are definitely of pygmy stature, and friendly to man, and in fairy-lore ordinarily correspond to mine-haunting fairies or goblins, to pixies, *corrigans*, leprechauns, and to such elves as live in rocks, caverns, or earth—an important consideration entirely overlooked by champions of the Pygmy Theory. Those inhabiting the air are called Sylphs. These Sylphs, commonly described as little spirits like pygmies in form, correspond to most of the fairies who are not of the Tuatha De Danann or ‘gentry’ type, and who as a race are beautiful and graceful. They are quite like the fairies in Shakespeare’s *Midsummer-Night’s Dream*; and especially like the aerials in *The Tempest*, which, according to Mr. Morton Luce, a commentator on the drama, seem to have been shaped by Shakespeare from his knowledge of Rosicrucian occultism, in which such spirits hold an important place. Those inhabiting the water are called Undines, and correspond exactly to the fairies who live in sacred fountains, lakes, or rivers. And the fourth kind, those inhabiting the fire, are called Salamanders, and seldom appear in the Celtic Fairy-Faith: they are supreme in the elementary hierarchies. All these Elementals, who procreate after the manner of men, are said to have bodies of an elastic half-material essence, which is sufficiently ethereal not to be visible to the physical sight, and probably comparable to matter in the form of invisible gases. Mr. W. B. Yeats has given this explanation:—‘Many poets, and all mystic and occult writers, in all ages and countries, have declared that behind the visible are chains on chains of conscious beings, who are not of heaven but of the earth, who have no inherent form, but change according to their whim, or the mind that sees them. You cannot lift your hand without influencing and being influenced by hordes. The visible world is merely their skin. In dreams we go amongst them, and play with them, and combat with them. They are, perhaps, human souls in the crucible—these creatures of whim.’<sup>147</sup> And bringing this into relation with ordinary fairies, he says:—‘Do not think the fairies are always little. Everything is capricious about them, even their size. They seem to take what size or shape pleases them.’<sup>147</sup> In *The Celtic Twilight* Mr. Yeats makes the statement that the

‘fairies in Ireland are sometimes as big as we are, sometimes bigger, and sometimes, as I have been told, about three feet high.’<sup>148</sup>

Mrs. X, a cultured Irishwoman now living in County Dublin, who as a percipient fulfils all the exacting requirements which psychologists and pathologists would demand, tells me that very frequently she has had visions of fairy beings in Ireland, and her own classification and description of these fairy beings, chiefly according to their stature, are as follows: —‘Among the usually invisible races which I have seen in Ireland, I distinguish five classes. (1) There are the Gnomes, who are earth-spirits, and who seem to be a sorrowful race. I once saw some of them distinctly on the side of Ben Bulbin. They had rather round heads and dark thick-set bodies, and in stature were about two and one-half feet. (2) The Leprechauns are different, being full of mischief, though they, too, are small. I followed a leprechaun from the town of Wicklow out to the *Carraig Sidhe*, “Rock of the Fairies,” a distance of half a mile or more, where he disappeared. He had a very merry face, and beckoned to me with his finger. (3) A third class are the Little People, who, unlike the Gnomes and Leprechauns, are quite good-looking; and they are very small. (4) The Good People are tall beautiful beings, as tall as ourselves, to judge by those I saw at the *rath* in Rosses Point. They direct the magnetic currents of the earth. (5) The Gods are really the Tuatha De Danann, and they are much taller than our race. There may be many other classes of invisible beings which I do not know.’ (Recorded on October 16, 1910.)

And independently of the Celtic peoples there is available very much testimony of the most reliable character from modern disciples of the mediaeval occultists, e.g. the Rosicrucians, and the Theosophists, that there exist in nature invisible spiritual beings of pygmy stature and of various forms and characters, comparable in all respects to the little people of Celtic folk-lore. How all this is parallel to the Celtic Fairy-Faith is perfectly evident, and no comment of ours is necessary.<sup>149</sup>

This point of view, presented by mediaeval and modern occult sciences and confirmed by Celtic and non-Celtic percipients, when considered in relation to its non-Celtic sources and then at once contrasted with ancient



and modern Celtic beliefs of the same character which constitute it—to be seen in the above Gaelic and Brythonic manuscript and other evidence, and in Cædmon's theory that angels are small beings—plunges us into the very complex and extremely difficult problem how far fairies as pygmy spirits may be purely Celtic, and how far they may reflect beliefs not Celtic. The problem, however, is far too complicated to be discussed here; and one may briefly say that there seems to have been a time in the evolution of animism when the ancient Celts of Britain, of Ireland, and of Continental Europe too, held, in common with the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Teutons, an original Aryan doctrine. This doctrine, after these four stocks separated in possession of it, began to evolve its four specialized aspects which we now can study; and in the Irish Universities of the early Christian centuries, when Ireland was the centre of European learning, the classical and Celtic aspects of it met for the first time since their prehistoric divorcement. There, as is clearly seen later among the mediaeval alchemists and occultists, a new influence—from Christian theology—was superadded to the ancient animistic beliefs of Europe as they had evolved up to that time.

## **Conclusion**

The ethnological argument, after allowing for all its shortcomings, suggests that small-statured races like Lapps and Eskimos (though not necessarily true pygmy races, of whose existence in Europe there is no proof available) did once inhabit lands where there are Celts, and that a Celtic folk-memory of these could conceivably have originated a belief in certain kinds of fairies, and thus have been a shaping influence in the animistic traditions about other fairies. The animistic argument shows that pygmies described in Celtic literature and in Celtic and non-Celtic mythologies are nearly always to be thought of as non-human spirits; and that there is now and was in past ages a world-wide belief that the human soul is in stature a pygmy. The philosophical argument of alchemists and mystics, in a way, draws to itself the animistic argument, and sets up the

hypothesis that the smallness of elves and fairies is due to their own nature, because they actually exist as invisible tribes of non-human beings of pygmy size and form.

### **The Changeling Belief**

The smallness of fairies, which has just been considered, and the belief in changelings are the two most prominent characteristics of the Fairy-Faith, according to our evidence in <sup>chapter ii</sup>; and we are now to consider the second. The prevalent and apparently the only important theories which are current to explain this belief in changelings may be designated as the Kidnap Theory and the Human-Sacrifice Theory. These we shall proceed to estimate, after which there will be introduced newer and seemingly more adequate theories.

### **Kidnap Theory**

Some writers have argued that the changeling belief merely reflects a time when the aboriginal pre-Celtic peoples held in subjection by the Celts, and forced to live in mountain caverns and in secret retreats underground, occasionally kidnapped the children of their conquerors, and that such kidnapped children sometimes escaped and told to their Celtic kinsmen highly romantic tales about having been in an underground fairy-world with fairies. Frequently this argument has taken a slightly different form: that instead of unfriendly pre-Celtic peoples it was magic-working Druids who—either through their own choice or else, having been driven to bay by the spread of Christianity, through force of circumstances—dwelt in secret in chambered mounds or souterrains, or in dense forests, and then stole young people for recruits, sometimes permitting them, years afterwards, when too old to be of further use, to return home under an inviolable vow of secrecy.<sup>150</sup> And Mr. David MacRitchie in supporting his own Pygmy

Theory has made interesting modern elaborations of these two slightly different theories concerning changelings.<sup>151</sup>

As already pointed out, there are definite ethnological elements blended in the other parts of the complex Fairy-Faith; and so in this part of it, the changeling belief, there are conceivably more of such elements which lend some support to the Kidnap Theory. In itself, however, as we hope to show conclusively, the Theory, failing to grasp the essential and underlying character of this belief, does not adequately explain it.

### **Human-Sacrifice Theory**

Alfred Nutt advanced a theory, which anticipated one part of our own, that ‘the changeling story is found to be connected with the antique conception of life and sacrifice’. And he wrote:—‘It is at least possible that the sickly and ailing would be rejected when the time came for each family to supply its quota of victims, and this might easily translate itself in the folk-memory into the statement that the fairies had carried off the healthy’ (alone acceptable as sacrifice) ‘and left in exchange the sickly.’<sup>152</sup> Though our evidence will not permit us to accept the theory (why it will not will be clear as we proceed) that some such sacrificial customs among the ancient Celts entirely account for the changeling story, yet we consider it highly probable that the theory helps to explain particular aspects of the complex tradition, and that the underlying philosophy of sacrifice extended in an animistic way, as we shall try to extend it, probably offers more complete explanation.

Thus, the Mexicans believed that the souls of all sacrificed children went to live with the god Tlaloc in his heaven-world.<sup>153</sup> Among the Greeks, a sacrificed victim appears to have been sent as a messenger, bearing a message repeated to him before death to some god.<sup>154</sup> On the funeral pile of Patroclus were laid Trojan captives, together with horses and hounds, a practice corresponding to that of American Red Men; the idea being that the sacrificed Trojans and the horses and hounds as well, were thus sent to

serve the slain warriors in the otherworld. Among ourselves in Europe and in America it is not uncommon to read in the daily newspaper about a suicide as resulting from the belief that death alone can bring union with a deceased sweetheart or loved one. These examples, and very many parallel ones to be found the world over, seem to furnish the key to the theory of sacrifice: namely, that by extinguishing life in this world it is transmitted to the world of the gods, spirits, and the dead.

Both Sir John Rhÿs and D'Arbois de Jubainville have shown that the Irish were wont to sacrifice the first-born of children and of flocks.<sup>155</sup> O'Curry points out a clear case of human sacrifice at an ancient Irish funeral<sup>156</sup>:—‘Fiachra then brought fifty hostages with him from Munster’; and, when he died, ‘the hostages which he brought from the south were buried alive around the *Fert* (burial mound) of Fiachra.’ More commonly the ancient Celts seem to have made sacrifices to appease place-spirits before the erection of a new building, by sending to them through death the soul of a youth (see p. 436).

It is in such animistic beliefs as these, which underlie sacrifice, that we find a partial solution of the problem of changeling belief. But the sacrifice theory is also inadequate; for, though changelings may in some cases in ancient times have conceivably been the sickly children discarded by priests as unfit for sending to the gods or fairies, how can we explain actual changelings to be met with to-day in all Celtic lands? Some other hypothesis is evidently necessary.

### **Soul-Wandering Theory**

Comparative study shows that non-Celtic changeling beliefs parallel to those of the Celts exist almost everywhere, that they centre round the primitive idea that the human soul can be abstracted from the body by disembodied spirits and by magicians, and that they do not depend upon the sacrifice theory, though animistically closely related to it. For example, according to the Lepers' Islanders, ghosts steal men—as fairies do—‘to add

them to their company; and if a man has left children when he died, one of whom sickens afterwards, it is said that the dead father takes it.'<sup>157</sup> In Banks Island, Polynesia, the ghost of a woman who has died in childbirth is greatly dreaded: as long as her child is on earth she cannot proceed to Panoi, the otherworld; and the relatives take her child to another house, 'because they know that the mother will come back to take its soul.'<sup>158</sup> When a Motlav child sneezes, the mother will cry, 'Let him come back into the world! let him remain.' Under similar circumstances in Mota, the cry is, 'Live; roll back to us!' 'The notion is that a ghost is drawing a child's soul away.' If the child falls ill the attempt has succeeded, and a wizard throws himself into a trance and goes to the ghost-world to bring the child's soul back.<sup>159</sup> In the islands of Kei and Kisar a belief prevails that the spirits of the dead can take to themselves the souls of the living who go near the graves.<sup>160</sup> Sometimes a Polynesian mother insists on being buried with her dead child; or a surviving wife with her dead husband, so that there will be no separation.<sup>161</sup> These last practices help to illustrate the Celtic theory behind the belief that fairies can abduct adults.

Throughout Melanesia sickness is generally attributed to the soul's absence from the body, and this state of disembodiment is believed to be due to some ghost's or spirit's interference,<sup>162</sup> just as among Celts sickness is often thought to be due to fairies having taken the soul to Fairyland. An old Irish piper who came up to Lady Gregory's home at Coole Park told us that a certain relative of his, a woman, had lain in a semi-conscious state of illness for months, and that when she recovered full consciousness she declared she had been with the 'good people'.

Folk-beliefs like all the above, which more adequately explain the changeling idea than the Human-Sacrifice Theory, are world-wide, being at once Celtic and non-Celtic.<sup>163</sup>

### **Demon-Possession Theory**

There has been among many peoples, primitive and civilized, a complementary belief to the one that evil spirits or ghosts may steal a soul and so cause in the vacated body illness if the abduction is temporary, and death if it is permanent: namely, a belief that demons, who sometimes may be souls of the dead, can possess a human body while the soul is out of it during sleep, or else can expel the soul and occupy its place.<sup>164</sup> When complete possession of this character takes place there is—as in ‘mediumship’—a change of personality, and the manner, thoughts, actions, language, and the whole nature of the possessed person are radically changed. Sometimes a foreign tongue, of which the subject is ignorant, is fluently spoken. When the possession is an evil one, as Dr. Nevius has observed in China, where the phenomena are common, the change of character is in the direction of immorality, frequently in strong contrast with the character of the subject under normal conditions, and is often accompanied by paroxysms and contortions of the body, as I have often been solemnly assured by Celts is the case in a changeling. (See M. Le Scour’s account on page 198, of three changelings that he saw in one family in Finistère; and compare what is said about fairy changelings in Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man, Wales, and Cornwall.)

A conception like that among the Chinese, of how an evil spirit may dispossess the soul inhabiting a child’s or adult’s body, seems to be the basis and original conception behind the fairy-changeling belief in all Celtic and other countries. When a child has been changed by fairies, and an old fairy left in its place, the child has been, according to this theory, dispossessed of its body by an evil fairy, which a Chinaman calls a demon, while the leaving behind of the old fairy accounts for the changed personality and changed facial expression of the demon-possessed infant. The Chinese demon enters into and takes complete possession of the child’s body while the child’s soul is out of it during sleep—and all fairies make changelings when a babe is asleep in its cradle at night, or during the day when it is left alone for a short time. The Chinese child-soul is then unable to return into its body until some kind of magical ceremony or exorcism expels the possessing demon; and through precisely similar methods, often

aided by Christian priests, Celts cure changelings made by fairies, pixies, and *corrigans*. In the following account, therefore, apparently lies the root explanation of the puzzling beliefs concerning fairy changelings so commonly met with in the Celtic Fairy-Faith:—‘To avert the calamity of nursing a demon, dried banana-skin is burnt to ashes, which are then mixed with water. Into this the mother dips her finger and paints a cross upon the sleeping babe’s forehead. In a short time the demon soul returns—for the soul wanders from the body during sleep and is free—but, failing to recognize the body thus disguised, flies off. The true soul, which has been waiting for an opportunity, now approaches the dormant body, and, if the mark has been washed off in time, takes possession of it; but if not, it, like the demon, failing to recognize the body, departs, and the child dies in its sleep.’<sup>165</sup>

In relation to this Demon-Possession Theory, the writer has had the opportunity of observing carefully some living changelings among the Celts, and is convinced that in many such cases there is an undoubted belief expressed by the parents and friends that fairy-possession has taken place. This belief often translates itself naturally into the folk-theory that the body of the child has also been changed, when examination proves only a change of personality as recognized by psychologists; or, in a distinct type of changelings, those who exhibit great precocity in childhood combined with an old and wizened countenance, there is neither a changed personality nor demon-possession, but simply some abnormal physical or mental condition, in the nature of cretinism, atrophy, marasmus, or arrested development. One of the most striking examples of a changeling exists at Plouharnel-Carnac, Brittany, where there is now living a dwarf Breton whom I have photographed and talked with, and who may possibly combine in himself both the abnormal psychical and the abnormal pathological conditions. He is no taller than a normal child ten years old, but being over thirty years old he is thick-set, though not deformed. All the peasants who know him call him ‘the Little *Corrigan*’, and his own mother declares that he is not the child she gave birth to. He once said to me with a kind of pathetic protest, ‘Did M. ——tell you that I am a demon?’

## Conclusion

The Kidnap Theory, resting entirely upon the ethnological and social or psychological elements which we have elsewhere pointed out as existing in the superficial aspects of the essentially animistic Fairy-Faith as a whole, is accordingly limited in its explanation of this specialized part of the Fairy-Faith, the changeling belief, to these same elements which may exist in the changeling belief. And, on the showing of anthropology, the other theories undoubtedly offer a more adequate explanation.

By means of sacrifice, according to its underlying philosophy, man is able to transmit souls from this world to the world where dwell the gods and fairy-folk both good and evil. Thus, had Abraham sacrificed Isaac, the soul of Isaac would have been taken to heaven by Jehovah as fairies take souls to Fairyland through death. But the difference is that in human sacrifice men do voluntarily and for specific religious ends what various kinds of fairies or spirits would do without human intervention and often maliciously, as our review of ancient and modern theories of sacrifice has shown. Gods and fairies are spiritual beings; hence only the spiritual part of man can be delivered over to them.

Melanesians and other peoples whose changeling beliefs have now been examined, regard all illness and death as the result of spirit interference; while Celts regard strange maladies in children and in adults as the result of fairy interference. And to no Celt is death in early life a natural thing: if it comes to a child or to a beautiful youth in any way whatsoever, the fairies have taken what they coveted. In all mythologies gods have always enjoyed the companionship of beautiful maidens, and goddesses the love of heroic youths; and they have often taken them to their world as the Tuatha De Danann took the great heroes of the ancient Celts to the Otherworld or Avalon, and as they still in the character of modern fairies abduct brides and young mothers, and bridegrooms or other attractive young men whom they wish to have with them in Fairyland (see our chapters iv-vi).



Where sacrifice or death has not brought about such complete transfer or abduction of the soul to the fairy world, there is only a temporary absence from human society; and, meanwhile, the vacated body is under a fairy spell and lies ill, or unconscious if there is a trance state. If the body is an infant's, a fairy may possess it, as in the Chinese theory of demon-possession. In such cases the Celts often think that the living body is that of another child once *taken* but since grown too old for Fairyland; though the rational explanation frequently is purely pathological. Looked at philosophically, a fairy exchange of this kind is fair and evenly balanced, and there has been no true robbery. And in this aspect of the changeling creed—an aspect of it purely Celtic—there seems to be still another influence apart from human sacrifice, soul-abductions, demon or fairy-possession, and disease; namely, a greatly corrupted folk-memory of an ancient re-birth doctrine: the living are taken to the dead or the fairies and then sent back again, after the manner of Socrates' argument that the living come from the dead and the dead from the living (cf. our chapter <sup>vii</sup>). In all such exchanges, the economy of Nature demands that the balance between the two worlds be maintained: hence there arose the theories of human sacrifice, of soul abduction, of demon or fairy-possession; and in all these collectively is to be found the complete psychological explanation of the fairy-changeling and fairy-abduction beliefs among ancient and modern Celts as these show themselves in the Fairy-Faith. All remaining classes of changelings, which fall outside the scope of this clearly defined psychological theory, are to be explained pathologically.

### **Magic and Witchcraft**

The evidence from each Celtic country shows very clearly that magic and witchcraft are inseparably blended in the Fairy-Faith, and that human beings, i.e. 'charmings,' *dynion hysbys*, and other magicians, and sorceresses, are often enabled through the aid of fairies to perform the same magical acts as fairies; or, again, like Christian priests who use exorcisms,

they are able, acting independently, to counteract fairy power, thereby preventing changelings or curing them, saving churnings, healing man or beast of 'fairy-strokes', and, in short, nullifying all undesirable influences emanating from the fairy world. A correct interpretation of these magical elements so prominent in the Fairy-Faith is of fundamental importance, because if made it will set us on one of the main psychical highways which traverse the vast territory of our anthropological inquiry. Let us, then, undertake such an interpretation, first setting up, as we must, some sort of working hypothesis as to what magic is, witchcraft being assumed to be a part of magic.

### **Theories of Modern Anthropologists**

We may define magic, as understood by ancients and moderns, civilized or non-civilized, apart from conjuring, which is mere jugglery and deception of the senses, as the art of controlling for particular ends various kinds of invisible forces, often, and, as we hold, generally thought of as intelligent spirits. This is somewhat opposed to Mr. Marett's point of view, which emphasizes 'pre-animistic influences', i.e. 'powers to which the animistic form is very vaguely attributed if at all.' And, in dealing with the anthropological aspects of spell-casting in magical operations, Mr. Marett conceives such a magical act to be in relation to the magician 'generically, a projection of imperative will, and specifically one that moves on a supernormal plane', and the victim's position towards this invisible projected force to be 'a position compatible with *rapport*'.<sup>166</sup> He also thinks it probable that the essence of the magician's supernormal power lies in what Melanesians call *mana*.<sup>166</sup> In our opinion *mana* may be equated with what William James, writing of his attitude toward psychical phenomena, called a universally diffused 'soul-stuff' leaking through, so to speak, and expressing itself in the human individual.<sup>167</sup> On this view, Mr. Marett's theory would amount to saying that magicians are able to produce magical effects because they are able to control this 'soul-stuff'; and our evidence

would regard all spirits and fairies as portions of such universally diffused *mana*, ‘soul-stuff’, or, as Fechner might call it, the ‘Soul of the World’. Moreover, in essence, such an idea of magic coincides, when carefully examined, with what ancient thinkers like Plato, Iamblichus, the Neo-Platonists generally, and mediaeval magicians like Paracelsus and Eliphas Levi, called magic; and agrees with ancient Celtic magic—judging from what Roman historians have recorded concerning it, and from Celtic manuscripts themselves.

Other modern anthropologists have set up far less satisfactory definitions of magic. According to Dr. Frazer, for example, magic assumes, as natural science does, that ‘one event follows another necessarily and invariably without the intervention of any spiritual or personal agency’.<sup>168</sup> Such a theory is not supported by the facts of anthropology; and does not even apply to those specialized and often superficial kinds of magic classed under it by Dr. Frazer as ‘sympathetic and imitative magic’, i.e. that through which like produces like, or part produces whole. To our mind, sympathetic and imitative magic (to leave out of account many fallacious and irrational ritualistic practices, which Dr. Frazer includes under these loose terms), *when genuine*, in their varied aspects are directly dependent upon hypnotic states, upon telepathy, mind-reading, mental suggestion, association of ideas, and similar processes; in short, are due to the operation of mind on mind and will on will, and, moreover, are recognized by primitive races to have this fundamental character. Or, according to the Fairy-Faith, they are caused by a fairy or disembodied spirit acting upon an embodied one, a man or woman; and not, as Dr. Frazer holds, through ‘mistaken applications of one or other of two great fundamental laws of thought, namely, the association of ideas by similarity and the association of ideas by contiguity in space or time’.<sup>169</sup>

The mechanical causation theory of magic, as thus set forth in *The Golden Bough*, does not imply *mana* or will-power, as Mr. Marett’s more adequate theory does in part. Dr. Frazer wishes us to regard animistic religious practices as distinct from magic.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, in direct opposition to Dr. Frazer’s view, the weight of the evidence from the past

and from the present, which we are about to offer, is decidedly favourable to our regarding magic and religion as complementary to one another and, for all ordinary purposes of the anthropologist, as in principle the same. The testimony touching magicians in all ages, Celtic magic and witchcraft as well, besides that resulting from modern psychical research, tends to establish an almost exclusively animistic hypothesis to account for fairy magical phenomena and like phenomena among human beings; and with these phenomena we are solely concerned.

### *Among the Ancients*<sup>171</sup>

Among the more cultured Greeks and Romans—and the same can be said of most great nations of antiquity—it was an unquestioned belief that innumerable gods, placed in hierarchies, form part of an unbroken spiritual chain at the lowest end of which stands man, and at the highest the incomprehensible Supreme Deity. These gods, having their abodes throughout the Universe, act as the agents of the Unknown God, directing the operation of His cosmic laws and animating every star and planet. Inferior to these gods, and to man also, the ancients believed there to be innumerable hosts of invisible beings, called by them daemons, who, acting as the servants of the gods, control, and thus in a secondary sense create, all the minor phenomena of inanimate and animate nature, such as tempests, atmospheric disturbances generally, the failure of crops or their abundance, maladies and their cure, good and evil passions in men, wars and peace, and all the blessings and curses which affect the purely human life.

Man, being of the god-race and thus superior to these lower, servile entities, could, like the gods, control them if adept in the magical sciences; for ancient Magic, about which so much has been written and about which so little has been understood by most people in ancient, mediaeval, and modern times, is according to the wisest ancients nothing more than the controlling of daemons, shades, and all sorts of secondary spirits or elementals by men specially trained for that purpose. Sufficient records are

extant to make it evident that the fundamental training of Egyptian, Indian, Assyrian, Greek, Roman, and Druid priests was in the magical or occult sciences. Pliny, in his *Natural History*, says:—‘And to-day Britain practises the art [of magic] with religious awe and with so many ceremonies that it might seem to have made the art known to the Persians.’<sup>172</sup> Herein, then, is direct evidence that the Celtic Fairy-Faith, considered in its true psychic nature, has been immediately shaped by the ancient Celtic religion; and, as our witness from the Isle of Skye so clearly set forth, that it originated among a cultured class of the Celts more than among the peasants. And, in accordance with this evidence, Professor Georges Dottin, who has made a special study of the historical records concerning Druidism, writes:—‘The Druids of Ireland appear to us above all as magicians and prophets. They foretell the future, they interpret the secret will of the *fées* (fairies), they cast lots.’<sup>173</sup> Thus, in spite of the popular and Christian reshaping which the belief in fairies has had to endure, its origin is easily enough discerned even in its modern form, covered over though this is with accretions foreign to its primal character.

Magic was the supreme science because it raised its adepts out of the ordinary levels of humanity to a close relationship with the gods and creative powers. Nor was it a science to be had for the asking, ‘for many were the wand-bearers and few the chosen.’ Roman writers tell us that neophytes for the druidic priesthood often spent twenty years in severe study and training before being deemed fit to be called Druids. We need not, however, in this study enter into an exposition of the ordeals and trials of candidates seeking magical training, or else initiation into the Mysteries. There were always two schools to which they could apply, directly opposed in their government and policy—the school of white magic and the school of black magic; the former being a school in which magical powers were used in religious rites and always for good ends, the latter a school in which all magical powers were used for wholly selfish and evil ends. In both schools the preliminary training was the same; that is to say, the first thing taught to the neophyte was self-control. When he proved himself absolutely his own master, when his teachers were certain that he could not be

dominated by another will or by any outside or psychic influence, then for the first time he was permitted to exercise his own iron will in controlling daemons, ghosts, and all the elemental hosts of the air—either as a white magician or as a black magician.<sup>174</sup>

The magical sciences taught (an idea which still holds its ground, as one can discover in modern India) that by formulas of invocation, by chants, by magic sounds, by music, these invisible beings can be made to obey the will of the magician even as they obey the will of the gods. The calling up of the dead and talking with them is called necromancy; the foretelling through spiritual agency and otherwise of coming events or things hidden, like the outcome of a battle, is called divination; the employment of charms against children so as to prevent their growing is known as fascination; to cause any ill fortune or death to fall upon another person by magic is sorcery; to excite the sexual passions of man or woman, magical mixtures called philtres are used. Almost all these definitions apply to the practices of black magic. But the great schools known as the Mysteries were of white magic, in so far as they practised the art; and such men as Pythagoras, Plato, and Aeschylus, who are supposed to have been initiated into them, always held them in the highest reverence, though prohibited from directly communicating anything of their esoteric teachings concerning the origin and destiny of man, the nature of the gods, and the constitution of the universe and its laws.

In Plato's *Banquet* the power or function of the daemoniac element in nature is explained. Socrates asks of the prophetess Diotima what is the power of the daemoniac element (personified as Love for the purposes of the argument), and she replies:—‘He interprets between gods and men, conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and therefore in him all is bound together, and through him the arts of the prophets and priests, their sacrifices and mysteries and charms, and all prophecy and incantation find their way. For God mingles not with man; but through the daemoniac element (or Love) all the intercourse and converse of God with man,

whether awake or asleep, is carried on. The wisdom which understands this is spiritual.’<sup>175</sup>

### Among the Ancient Celts

If we turn now directly to Celtic magic in ancient times, we discover that the testimony of Pliny is curiously confirmed by Celtic manuscripts, chiefly Irish ones, and that then, as now, witchcraft and fairy powers over men and women are indistinguishable in their general character. Thus, in the *Echtra Condla*, ‘the Adventures of Connla,’ the fairy woman says of Druidism and magic:—‘Druidism is not loved, little has it progressed to honour on the Great Strand. When his law shall come it will scatter the charms of Druids *from journeying on the lips of black, lying demons*’—so characterized by the Christian transcribers.<sup>176</sup> In *How Fionn Found his Missing Men*, an ancient tale preserved by oral tradition until recorded by Campbell, it is said that ‘Fionn then went out with Bran (his fairy dog). There were millions of people (apparitions) out before him, called up by some sleight of hand’.<sup>177</sup> In the *Leabhar na h-Uidre*, or ‘Book of the Dun Cow’ (p. 43 a), compiled from older manuscripts about A. D. 1100, there is a clear example of Irish fetishism based on belief in the power of demons:—‘... for their swords used to turn against them (the Ulstermen) when they made a false trophy. Reasonable [was] this; for demons used to speak to them from their arms, so that hence their arms were safeguards.’<sup>178</sup>

Shape-shifting quite after the fairy fashion is very frequently met with in old Celtic literature. Thus, in the Rennes *Dinnshenchas* there is this passage showing that spirits or fairies were regarded as necessary for the employment of magic:—‘Folks were envious of them (Faifne the poet and his sister Aige): so they loosed elves at them who transformed Aige into a fawn’ (the form assumed by the fairy mother of Oisín, see p. 299 n.), ‘and sent her on a circuit all round Ireland, and the fians of Meilge son of Cobthach, king of Ireland, killed her.’<sup>179</sup> A fact which ought to be noted in this connexion is that kings or great heroes, rather than ordinary men and

women, are very commonly described as being able to shift their own shape, or that of other people; e.g. ‘Mongan took on himself the shape of Tibraide, and gave Mac an Daimh the shape of the cleric, with a large tonsure on his head.’<sup>180</sup> And when this fact is coupled with another, namely the ancient belief that such kings and great heroes were incarnations and reincarnations of the Tuatha De Danann, who form the supreme fairy hierarchy, we realize that, having such an origin, they were simply exercising in human bodies powers which their divine race exercise over men from the fairy world (see our chapter iv).

In Brythonic literature and mythology, magic and witchcraft with the same animistic character play as great or even a greater rôle than in Gaelic literature and mythology. This is especially true with respect to the Arthurian Legend, and to the *Mabinogion*, some of which tales are regarded by scholars as versions of Irish ones. Sir John Rhÿs and Professor J. Loth, who have been the chief translators of the *Mabinogion*, consider their chief literary machinery to be magic (see our <sup>chapter v</sup>).

So far it ought to be clear that Celtic magic contains much animism in its composition, and that these few illustrations of it, selected from numerous illustrations in the ancient Fairy-Faith, confirm Pliny’s independent testimony that in his age the Britons seemed capable of instructing even the Persians themselves in the magical arts.

### **European and American Witchcraft**

In a general way, the history of witchcraft in Europe and in the American colonies is supplementary to what has already been said, seeing that it is an offshoot of mediaeval magic, which in turn is an offshoot of ancient magic. Witchcraft in the West, in probably a majority of cases, is a mere fabric of absurd superstitions and practices—as it is shown to be by the evidence brought out in so many of the horrible legal and ecclesiastical processes conducted against helpless and eccentric old people, and other men and women, including the young, often for the sake of private revenge,



and generally on no better foundation than hearsay and false accusations. In the remaining instances it undoubtedly arose, as ancient witchcraft (black magic) seems to have arisen, through the infiltration of occult knowledge into uneducated and often criminally inclined minds, so that what had formerly been secretly guarded among the learned, and generally used for legitimate ends, degenerated in the hands of the unfit into black magic. In our own age, a parallel development, which adequately illustrates our subject of inquiry, has taken place in the United States: fragments of magical lore bequeathed by Mesmer and his immediate predecessors, the alchemists, were practically and honestly applied to the practice of magnetic healing and healing through mental suggestion by a small group of practitioners in Massachusetts, and then with much ingenuity and real genius were applied by Mary Baker Eddy to the interpretation of miraculous healing by Jesus Christ. Hence arose a new religion called Christian Science. But this religious movement did not stop at mental healing: according to published reports, during the years 1908–9 the leader of the New York First Church of Christ, Scientist, was deposed, and, with certain of her close associates, was charged with having projected daily against the late Mrs. Eddy's adjutant a current of 'malicious animal magnetism' from New York to Boston, in order to bring about his death. The process is said to have been for the deposed leader and her friends to sit together in a darkened room with their eyes closed. 'Then one of them would say: "You all know Mr. ——. You all know that his place is in the darkness whence he came. If his place is six feet under ground, that is where he should be." Then all present would concentrate their minds on the one thought—Mr. ——and six feet under ground.' And this practice is supposed to have been kept up for days. Mrs. ——, who gives this testimony, is a friend of the victim, and she asserts that these evil thought-waves slowly but surely began his effacement, and that had the black magicians down in New York not been discovered in time, Mr. ——could not have withstood the forces.<sup>181</sup> Perhaps so enlightened a country as the United States may in time see history repeat itself, and add a new chapter to witchcraft; for the true witches were not the kind who are popularly

supposed to ride on broomsticks and to keep a house full of black cats, and the sooner this is recognized the better.

According to this aspect of Christian Science, ‘malicious animal magnetism’ (or black magic), an embodied spirit, i.e. a man or woman, possesses and can employ the same magical powers as a disembodied spirit—or, as the Celts would say, the same magical powers as a fairy—casting spells, and producing disease and death in the victim. And this view coincides with ordinary witchcraft theories; for witches have been variously defined as embodied spirits who have ability to act in conjunction with disembodied spirits through the employment of various occult forces, e.g. forces comparable to Mesmer’s odic forces, to the Melanesian *mana*, or to the ‘soul-stuff’ postulated by William James, or, as Celts think, to forces focused in fairies themselves. So, also, according to Mr. Marett’s view, there is a state of *rapport* between the victim and the magician or witch; and where such a state of *rapport* exists there is some *mana*-like force passing between the two poles of the magical circuit, whether it be only unconscious mental or electrical force emanating from the operator, or an extraneous force brought under control and concentrated in some such conscious unit as we designate by the term ‘spirit’, ‘devil’, or ‘fairy’.

In conformity with this psychical or animistic view of witchcraft, in the Capital Code of Connecticut (A. D. 1642) a witch is defined as one who ‘hath or consorteth with a familiar spirit’.<sup>182</sup> European codes, as illustrated by the sixth chapter of Lord Coke’s *Third Institute*, have parallels to this definition:—‘A witch is a person which hath conference with the devil; to consult with him to do some act.’<sup>182</sup> And upon these theories, not upon the broomstick and black-cat conception, were based the trials for witchcraft during the seventeenth century.

The Bible, then so frequently the last court of appeal in such matters, was found to sustain such theories about witches in the classical example of the Witch of Endor and Saul; and the idea of witchcraft in Europe and America came to be based—as it probably always had been in pagan times—on the theory that living persons could control or be controlled by disembodied spirits for evil ends. Hence all black magicians, and what are

now known as ‘spirit mediums’, were made liable by law to the death penalty.<sup>183</sup>

In mediaeval Europe the great difficulty always was, as is shown in the trials of Jeanne d’Arc, to decide whether the invisible agent in magical processes, such as was imputed to the accused, was an angel or a demon. If an angel, then the accused was a saint, and might become a candidate for canonization; but if a demon, the accused was a witch, and liable to a death-sentence. The wisest old doctors of the University of Paris, who sat in judgement (or were consulted) in one of Jeanne’s trials, could not fully decide this knotty problem, nor, apparently, the learned churchmen who also tried her; but evidently they all agreed that it was better to waive the question. And, finally, an innocent peasant girl who had heard Divine Voices, and who had thereby miraculously saved her king and her country, was burned at the stake, under the joint direction of English civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and, if not technically, at least practically, with the full approval of the corresponding French authorities, at Rouen, France, May 30, A. D. 1431.<sup>184</sup> In April, A. D. 1909, almost five centuries afterwards, it has been decided with tardy justice that Jeanne’s Voices were those of angels and not of demons, and she has been made a saint.

How the case of Jeanne d’Arc bears directly upon the Fairy-Faith is self-evident: One of the first questions asked by Jeanne’s inquisitors was ‘if she had any knowledge of those who went to the Sabbath with the fairies? or if she had not assisted at the assemblies held at the fountain of the fairies, near Domremy, around which dance malignant spirits?’ And another question exactly as recorded was this:—‘*Interrogée s’elle croiet point au devant de aujourduy, que les fées feussent mauvais esperis: respond qu’elle n’en sçavoit rien.*’<sup>185</sup>

## Conclusion

Finally, we may say that what medicine-men are to American Indians, to Polynesians, Australians, Africans, Eskimos, and many other

contemporary races, or what the mightier magicians of modern India are to their people, the ‘fairy-doctors’ and ‘charmners’ of Ireland, Scotland, and Man are to the Gaels, and the ‘*Dynion Hysbys*’ or ‘Wise Men’ of Wales, the witches of Cornwall, and the seers, sorceresses, and exorcists of Brittany are to the Brythons. These Gaelic and Brythonic magicians and witches, and ‘fairy mediums’, almost invariably claim to derive their power from their ability to see and to communicate with fairies, spirits, and the dead; and they generally say that they are enabled through such spiritual agencies to reveal the past, to foretell the future, to locate lost property, to cast spells upon human beings and upon animals, to remove such spells, to cure fairy strokes and changelings, to perform exorcisms, and to bring people back from Fairyland.

We arrive at the following conclusion:—If, as eminent psychical researchers now postulate (and as many of them believe), there are active and intelligent disembodied beings able to act psychically upon embodied men in much the same way that embodied men are known ordinarily to act psychically upon one another, then there is every logical and common-sense reason for extending this psychical hypothesis so as to include the ancient, mediaeval, and modern theory of magic and witchcraft, namely, that what embodied men and women can do in magical ways, as for example in hypnotism, disembodied men and women can do. Further, if fairies, in accord with reliable testimony from educated and critical percipients, hypothetically exist (whatever their nature may be), they may be possessed of magical powers of the same sort, and so can cast spells upon or possess living human beings as Celts believe and assert. And this hypothesis coincides in most essentials with the one we used as a basis for this discussion, that, in accordance with the Melanesian doctrine of control of ghosts and spirits with their inherent *mana*, magical acts are possible.<sup>186</sup> This in turn applied to the Celts amounts to a hypothetical confirmation of the ancient druidical doctrine that through control of fairies or demons (daemons) Druids or magicians could control the weather and natural phenomena connected with vegetable and animal processes, could cast spells, could divine the future, could execute all magical acts.

## Exorcisms

According to the testimony of anthropology, exorcism as a religious practice has always flourished wherever animistic beliefs have furnished it with the necessary environment; and not only has exorcism been a fundamental part of religious practices in past ages, but it is so at the present day. Among Christians, Celtic and non-Celtic, among followers of all the great historical religions, and especially among East Indians, Chinese, American Red Men, Polynesians, and most Africans, the expelling of demons from men and women, from animals, from inanimate objects, and from places, is sanctioned by well-established rituals. Exorcism as applied to the human race is thus defined in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie* (Roman Catholic) by L'Abbé Bergier:—‘*Exorcism*—conjunction, prayer to God, and command given to the demon to depart from the body of persons possessed.’ The same authority thus logically defends its practice by the Church:—‘Far from condemning the opinion of the Jews, who attributed to the demon certain maladies, that divine Master confirmed it.’<sup>187</sup> And whenever exorcism of this character has been or is now generally practised, the professional exorcist appears as a personage just as necessary to society as the modern doctor, since nearly all diseases were and to some extent are still, both among Christians and non-Christians, very often thought to be the result of demon-possession.

When we come to the dawn of the Christian period in Ireland and in Scotland, we see Patrick and Columba, the first and greatest of the Gaelic missionaries, very extensively practising exorcism; and there is every reason to believe (though the data available on this point are somewhat unsatisfactory) that their wide practice of exorcism was quite as much a Christian adaptation of pre-Christian Celtic exorcism, such as the Druids practised, as it was a continuation of New Testament tradition. We may now present certain of the data which tend to verify this supposition, and by means of them we shall be led to realize how fundamentally such an

animistic practice as exorcism must have shaped the Fairy-Faith of the Celts, both before and after the coming of Christianity.

‘Once upon a time,’ so the tale runs about Patrick, ‘his foster-mother went to milk the cow. He also went with her to drink a draught of new milk. Then the cow goes mad in the byre and killed five other kine: a demon, namely, entered her. There was great sadness on his foster-mother, and she told him to bring the kine back to life. Then he brought the kine to life, so that they were whole, and he cured the mad one. So God’s name and Patrick’s were magnified thereby.’<sup>188</sup> On another occasion, when demons came to Ireland in the form of black birds, quite after the manner of the Irish belief that fairies assume the form of crows (see pp. 302–5), the Celtic ire of Patrick was so aroused in trying to exorcize them out of the country that he threw his bell at them with such violence that it was cracked, and then he wept:—‘Now at the end of those forty days and forty nights’ [of Patrick’s long fast on the summit of Cruachan Aigle or Croagh Patrick, Ireland’s Holy Mountain] ‘the mountain was filled with black birds, so that he knew not heaven or earth. He sang maledictive psalms at them. They left him not because of this. Then his anger grew against them. He strikes his bell at them, so that the men of Ireland heard its voice, and he flung it at them, so that a gap broke out of it, and that [bell] is “Brigit’s Gapling”. Then Patrick weeps till his face and his chasuble in front of him were wet. No demon came to the land of Erin after that till the end of seven years and seven months and seven days and seven nights. Then the angel went to console Patrick and cleansed the chasuble, and brought white birds round the Rick, and they used to sing sweet melodies for him.’<sup>188</sup> In Adamnan’s *Life of S. Columba* it is said that ‘according to custom’, which in all probability was established in pagan times by the Druids and then maintained by their Christian descendants, it was usual to exorcize even a milk vessel before milking, and the milk in it afterwards.<sup>189</sup> Thus Adamnan tells us that one day a youth, Columban by name, when he had finished milking, went to the door of St. Columba’s cell carrying the pail full of new milk that, *according to custom*, the saint might exorcize it. When the holy man had made the sign of the cross in the air, the air ‘was greatly agitated,

and the bar of the lid, driven through its two holes, was shot away to some distance; the lid fell to the ground, and most of the milk was spilled on the soil.' Then the saint chided the youth, saying:—'Thou hast done carelessly in thy work to-day; for thou hast not cast out the demon that was lurking in the bottom of the empty pail, by tracing on it, before pouring in the milk, the sign of the Lord's cross; and now not enduring, thou seest, the virtue of the sign, he has quickly fled away in terror, while at the same time the whole of the vessel has been violently shaken, and the milk spilled. Bring then the pail nearer to me, that I may bless it.' When the half-empty pail was blessed, in the same moment it was refilled with milk. At another time, the saint, to destroy the practice of sorcery, commanded Silnan, a peasant sorcerer, to draw a vessel full of milk from a bull; and by his diabolical art Silnan drew the milk. Then Columba took it and said:—'Now it shall be proved that this, which is supposed to be true milk, is not so, but is blood deprived of its colour by the fraud of demons to deceive men; and straightway the milky colour was turned into its own proper quality, that is, into blood.' And it is added that 'The bull also, which for the space of one hour was at death's door, wasting and worn by a horrible emaciation, in being sprinkled with water blessed by the Saint, was cured with wonderful rapidity.'<sup>190</sup>

And to-day, as in the times of Patrick and Columba, exorcism is practised in Ireland and in the Western Hebrides of Scotland by the clergy of the Roman Church against fairies, demons, or evil spirits, when a person is possessed by them—that is to say, 'fairy-struck,' or when they have entered into some house or place; and on the Scotch mainland individual Protestants have been known to practise it. A haunted house at Balechan, Perthshire, in which certain members of the Psychological Research Society had taken up summer quarters to 'investigate', was exorcized by the late Archbishop of Edinburgh, assisted by a priest from the Outer Isles.<sup>191</sup>

Among the nine orders of the Irish ecclesiastical organization of Patrick's time, one was composed of exorcists.<sup>192</sup> The official ceremony for the ordination of an exorcist in the Latin Church was established by the Fourth Council of Carthage, and is indicated in nearly all the ancient rituals.

It consists in the bishop giving to the candidate the book of exorcisms and saying as he does so:—‘Receive and understand this book, and have the power of laying hands upon demoniacs, whether they be baptized, or whether they be catechumens.’<sup>193</sup> By a decree of the Church Council of Orange, making men possessed of a demon ineligible to enter the priesthood, it would seem that the number of demoniacs must have been very great.<sup>193</sup> As to the efficacy of exorcisms, the church Fathers during the first four centuries, when the Platonic philosophy was most influential in Christianity, are agreed.<sup>193</sup>

In estimating the shaping influences, designated by us as fundamental, which undoubtedly were exerted upon the Fairy-Faith through the practice of exorcism, it is necessary to realize that this animistic practice holds a very important position in the Christian religion which for centuries the Celtic peoples have professed. One of the two chief sacraments of Christianity, that of Baptism, is preceded by a definitely recognized exorcism, as shown in the Roman Ritual, where we can best study it. In the Exhortation preceding the rite the infant is called a slave of the demon, and by baptism is to be set free. The salt which is placed in the mouth of the infant by the priest during the ceremony has first been exorcized by special rites. Then there follows before the entrance to the baptismal font a regular exorcism pronounced over the child: the priest taking some of his own saliva on the thumb of his right hand, touches the child’s ears and nostrils, and commands the demon to depart out of the child. After this part of the ceremony is finished, the priest makes on the child’s forehead a sign of the cross with holy oil. Finally, in due order, comes the actual baptism.<sup>194</sup> And even after baptismal rites have expelled all possessing demons, precautions are necessary against a repossession: St. Augustine has said that exorcisms of precaution ought to be performed over every Christian daily; and it appears that faithful Roman Catholics who each day employ holy water in making the sign of the cross, and all Protestants who pray ‘lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil’, are employing such exorcisms.<sup>195</sup> St. Gregory of Nazianzus writes, ‘Arm yourself with the sign of the cross which the demons fear, and before which they take their flight’<sup>196</sup>; and by



the same sign, said St. Athanasius, ‘All the illusions of the demon are dissipated and all his snares destroyed.’<sup>197</sup> An eminent Catholic theologian asserts that saints who, since the time of Jesus Christ, have been endowed with the power of working miracles, have always made use of the sign of the cross in driving out demons, in curing maladies, and in raising the dead. In the *Instruction sur le Rituel*,<sup>198</sup> it is said that water which has been blessed is particularly designed to be used against demons; in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, formulated near the end of the fourth century, holy water is designated as a means of purification from sin and of putting the demon to flight.<sup>199</sup> And nowadays when the priest passes through his congregation casting over them holy water, it is as an exorcism of precaution; or when as in France each mourner at a grave casts holy water over the corpse, it is undoubtedly—whether done consciously as such or not—to protect the soul of the deceased from demons who are held to have as great power over the dead as over the living. Other forms of exorcism, too, are employed. For example, in the *Lebar Brecc*, it is said of the Holy Scripture that ‘By it the snares of devils and vices are expelled from every faithful one in the Church’.<sup>200</sup> And from all this direct testimony it seems to be clear that many of the chief practices of Christians are exorcisms, so that, like the religion of Zoroaster, the religion founded by Jesus has come to rest, at least in part, upon the basic recognition of an eternal warfare between good and bad spirits for the control of Man.

The curing of diseases through Christian exorcism is by no means rare now, and it was common a few centuries ago. Thus in the eighteenth century, beginning with 1752 and till his death, Gassner, a Roman priest of Closterle, diocese of Coire, Switzerland, devoted his life to curing people of possessions, declaring that one third of all maladies are so caused, and fixed his head-quarters at Elwangen, and later at Ratisbon. His fame spread over many countries of Europe, and he is said to have made ten thousand cures solely by exorcism.<sup>201</sup> And not only are human ills overcome by exorcism, but also the maladies of beasts: at Carnac, on September 13, there continues to be celebrated an annual fête in honour of St. Cornely, the patron saint of the country and the saint who (as his name seems to suggest) presides over

domestic *horned* animals; and if there is a cow, or even a sheep suffering from some ailment which will not yield to medicine, its owner leads it to the church door beneath the saint's statue, and the priest blesses it, and, as he does so, casts over it the exorcizing holy water. The Church Ritual designates two forms of Benediction for such animals, one form for those who are ordinarily diseased, and another for those suffering from some contagious malady. In each ceremony there comes first the sprinkling of the animal with holy water as it stands before the priest at the church door; and then there follows in Latin a direct invocation to God to bless the animal, 'to extinguish in it all diabolical powers,' to defend its life, and to restore it to health.<sup>202</sup>

In 1868, according to Dr. Evans, an old cow-house in North Wales was torn down, and in its walls was found a tin box containing an exorcist's formula. The box and its enclosed manuscript had been hidden there some years previously to ward off all evil spirits and witchcraft, for evidently the cattle had been dying of some strange malady which no doctors could cure. Because of its unique nature, and as an illustration of what Welsh exorcisms must have been like, we quote the contents of the manuscripts both as to spelling and punctuation as checked by Sir John Rhys with the original, except the undecipherable symbols which come after the archangels' names:—

☩ Lignum sanctae crucis defendat me a malis presentibus preteritis & futuris; interioribus & exterioribus ☩ ☩ Daniel Evans ☩ ☩ Omnes spiritus laudet Dominum: Mosen habent & prophetas. Exergat Deus & disipenture inimiciessus ☩ · ☩ O Lord Jesus Christ I beseech thee to preserve me Daniel Evans; and all that I possess from the power of all evil men, women; spirits, or wizards, or hardness of heart, and this I will trust thou will do by the same power as thou didst cause the blind to see the lame to walk and they that were possessed with unclean spirits to be in their own minds Amen Amen ☩ ☩ ☩ ☩ pater pater pater Noster Noster Noster aia aia aia Jesus ☩ Christus ☩ Messyas ☩ Emmanuel ☩ Soter ☩ Sabaoth ☩ Elohim ☩ on ☩ Adonay ☩ Tetragrammaton ☩ Ag : : ☩ Panthon ☩... reaton ☩ Agios ☩ Jasper ☩ Melchor ☩ Balthasar Amen ☩ ☩ ☩ \* 24 \* ♀ \* ♀ Δ ħ Δ 24 Δ ☉.

⊙ \* 24 \* ☉☿☿ And by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and His  
 Heavenly Angels  
 being our Redeemer and Saviour from  
 Gabriel [ *symbols* ] all witchcraft and from assaults of the  
 Michail [ *symbols* ] Devil Amen ☿ O Lord Jesus Christ  
 I beseech thee to preserve me and all that I possess from the power of all  
 evil men; women; spirits; or wizards past, present, or to come inward and  
 outward Amen ☿ ☿.<sup>203</sup>

From India Mr. W. Crooke reports similar exorcisms and charms to cure  
 and to protect cattle.<sup>204</sup> Thus there is employed in Northern India the  
*Ajaypâl jantra*, i.e. ‘the charm of the Invincible Protector,’ one of Vishnu’s  
 titles, in his character as the earth-god Bhûmiya—in Scotland it would be  
 the charm of the Invincible Fairy who presides over the flocks and to whom  
 libations are poured—in order to exorcize diseased cattle or else to prevent  
 cattle from becoming diseased. This *Ajaypâl jantra* is a rope of twisted  
 straw, in which chips of wood are inserted. ‘In the centre of the rope is  
 suspended an earthen platter, inside which an incantation is inscribed with  
 charcoal, and beside it is hung a bag containing seven kinds of grain.’ The  
 rope is stretched between two poles at the entrance of a village, and under it  
 the cattle pass to and fro from pasture. The following is the incantation  
 found on one of the earthen saucers:—‘O Lord of the Earth on which this  
 cattle-pen stands, protect the cattle from death and disease! I know of none,  
 save thee, who can deliver them.’ In the Morbihan, Lower Brittany, we  
 seem to see the same folk-custom, somewhat changed to be sure; for on  
 St. John’s Day, the christianized pagan sun-festival in honour of the summer  
 solstice, in which fairies and spirits play so prominent a part in all Celtic  
 countries, just outside a country village a great fire is lit in the centre of the  
 main road and covered over with green branches, in order to produce plenty  
 of smoke, and then on either side of this fire and through the exorcizing  
 smoke are made to pass all the domestic animals in the district as a  
 protection against disease and evil spirits, to secure their fruitful increase,  
 and, in the case of cows, abundant milk supply. Mr. Milne, while making  
 excavations in the Carnac country, discovered the image of a small bronze

cow, now in the Carnac Museum, and this would seem to indicate that before Christian times there was in the Morbihan a cult of cattle, preserved even until now, no doubt, in the Christian fête of St. Cornely, just as in St. Cornely's Fountain there is preserved a pagan holy well.

It ought now to be clear that both pre-Christian and Christian exorcisms among Celts have shaped the Fairy-Faith in a very fundamental manner. And anthropologically the whole subject of exorcism falls in line with the Psychological Theory of the nature and origin of the belief in fairies in Celtic countries.

### **Taboos**

We find that taboos, or prohibitions of a religious and social character, are as common in the living Fairy-Faith as exorcisms. The chief one is the taboo against naming the fairies, which inevitably results in the use of euphemisms, such as 'good people', 'gentry', 'people of peace', *Tylwyth Teg* ('Fair Folk'), or *bonnes dames* ('good ladies'). A like sort of taboo, with its accompanying use of euphemisms, existed among the Ancients, e.g. among the Egyptians and Babylonians, and early Celts as well, in a highly developed form; and it exists now among the native peoples of Australia, Polynesia, Central Africa, America, in Indian systems of Yoga, among modern Greeks, and, in fact, almost everywhere where there are vestiges of a primitive culture.<sup>205</sup> And almost always such a taboo is bound up with animistic and magical elements, which seem to form its background, just as it is in our own evidence.

To discuss name taboo in all its aspects would lead us more deeply into magic and comparative folk-lore than we have yet gone, and such discussion is unnecessary here. We may therefore briefly state that the root of the matter would seem to be that the name and the dread power named are so closely associated in the very concrete thought of the primitive culture that the one virtually is the other: just as one inevitably calls up the other for the modern thinker, so it is that, in the world of objective fact, for

the primitive philosopher the one is equivalent to the other. The primitive man, in short, has projected his subjective associations into reality. As regards euphemisms, the process of development possibly is that first you employ any substitute name, and that secondly you go on to employ such a substitute name as will at the same time be conciliatory. In the latter case, a certain anthropomorphosing of the power behind the taboo would seem to be involved.<sup>206</sup>

Next in prominence comes the food taboo; and to this, also, there are non-Celtic parallels all the world over, now and in ancient times. We may take notice of three very striking modern parallels:—A woman visited her dead brother in Panoi, the Polynesian Otherworld, and ‘he cautioned her to eat nothing there, and she returned’.<sup>207</sup> A Red Man, Ahak-tah, after an apparent death of two days’ duration, revived, and declared that he had been to a beautiful land of tall trees and singing-birds, where he met the spirits of his forefathers and uncle. While there, he felt hunger, and seeing in a bark dish some wild rice, wished to eat of it, but his uncle would allow him none. In telling about this psychical adventure, Ahak-tah said:—‘Had I eaten of the food of spirits, I never should have returned to earth.’<sup>208</sup> Also a New Zealand woman visited the Otherworld in a trance, and her dead father whom she met there ordered her to eat no food in that land, so that she could return to this world to take care of her child.<sup>209</sup>

All such parallels, like their equivalents in Celtic belief, seem to rest on this psychological and physiological conception in the folk-mind. Human food is what keeps life going in a human body; fairy food is what keeps life going in a fairy body; and since what a man eats makes him what he is physically, so eating the food of Fairyland or of the land of the dead will make the eater partake of the bodily nature of the beings it nourishes. Hence when a man or woman has once entered into such relation or communion with the Otherworld of the dead, or of fairies, by eating their food, his or her physical body<sup>210</sup> by a subtle transformation adjusts itself to the new kind of nourishment, and becomes spiritual like a spirit’s or fairy’s body, so that the eater cannot re-enter the world of the living. A study of food taboos confirms this conclusion.<sup>211</sup>

A third prominent taboo, the iron taboo, has been explained by exponents of the Pygmy Theory as pointing to a prehistoric race in Celtic lands who did not know iron familiarly, and hence venerated it so that in time it came to be religiously regarded as very efficacious against spirits and fairies. Undoubtedly there may be much reason in this explanation, which gives some ethnological support to the Pygmy Theory. Apparently, however, it is only a partial explanation of iron taboo in general, because, in many cases, iron in ancient religious rites certainly had magical properties attributed to it, which to us are quite unexplainable from this ethnological point of view;<sup>212</sup> and in Melanesia and in Africa, where iron is venerated now, the same explanation through ethnology seems far-fetched. But at present there seem to be no available data to explain adequately this iron taboo, though we have strong reasons for thinking that the philosophy underlying it is based on mystical conceptions of virtues attributed—reasonably or unreasonably—to various metals and precious stones, and that a careful examination of alchemical sciences would probably arrive at an explanation wholly psychological.

Besides many other miscellaneous taboos noticeable in the evidence, there is a place taboo which is prominent. Thus, if an Irishman cuts a thorn tree growing on a spot sacred to the fairies, or if he violates a fairy preserve of any sort, such as a fairy path, or by accident interferes with a fairy procession, illness and possibly death will come to his cattle or even to himself. In the same way, in Melanesia, violations of sacred spots bring like penalties: ‘A man planted in the bush near Olevuga some coco-nut and almond trees, and not long after died,’ the place being a spirit preserve;<sup>213</sup> and a man in the Lepers’ Island lost his senses, because, as the natives believed, he had unwittingly trodden on ground sacred to Tagaro, and ‘the ghost of the man who lately sacrificed there was angry with him’.<sup>213</sup> In this case the wizards were called in and cured the man by exorcisms,<sup>213</sup> as Irishmen, or their cows, are cured by the exorcisms of ‘fairy-doctors’ when ‘fairy-struck’ for some similar violation. The animistic background of place taboos in the Fairy-Faith is in these cases apparent.

## Among Ancient Celts

In the evidence soon to be examined from the recorded Fairy-Faith, we shall find taboos of various kinds often more prominent than in the living Fairy-Faith.<sup>214</sup> So essential are they to the character of much of the literary and mythological matter with which we shall have to deal in the following chapters, that at this point some suggestions ought to be made concerning their correct anthropological interpretation.

Almost every ancient Irish taboo is connected with a king or with a great hero like Cuchulainn; and, in Ireland especially, all such kings and heroes were considered of divine origin, and as direct incarnations, or reincarnations of the Tuatha De Danann, the true Fairies, originally inhabitants of the Otherworld. (See our <sup>chapter vii</sup>.) As Dr. Frazer points out to have been the case among non-Celts, with whom the same theory of incarnated divinities has prevailed, royal taboos are to isolate the king from all sources of danger, especially from all magic and witchcraft, and they act in many cases ‘so to say, as electrical insulators’ to preserve him or heroes who are equally divine.<sup>215</sup>

The early Celts recognized an intimate relationship between man and nature: unperceived by man, unseen forces—not dissimilar to what Melanesians call *Mana*—(looked on as animate and intelligent and frequently individual entities) guided every act of human life. It was the special duty of Druids to act as intermediaries between the world of men and the world of the Tuatha De Danann; and, as old Irish literature indicates clearly, it was through the exercise of powers of divination on the part of Druids that these declared what was taboo or what was unfavourable, and also what it was favourable for the divine king or hero to perform. As long as man kept himself in harmony with this unseen fairy-world in the background of nature, all was well; but as soon as a taboo was broken, disharmony in the relationship—which was focused in a king or hero—was set up; and when, as in the case of Cuchulainn, many taboos were violated, death was inevitable and not even the Tuatha De Danann could intercede.

Breaking of a royal or hero taboo not only affects the violator, but his subjects or followers as well: in some cases the king seems to suffer vicariously for his people. Almost every great Gaelic hero—a god or Great Fairy Being incarnate—is overshadowed with an impending fate, which only the strictest observance of taboo can avoid.<sup>216</sup>

Irish taboo, and inferentially all Celtic taboo, dates back to an unknown pagan antiquity. It is imposed at or before birth, or again during life, usually at some critical period, and when broken brings disaster and death to the breaker. Its whole background appears to rest on a supernatural relationship between divine men and the Otherworld of the Tuatha De Danann; and it is very certain that this ancient relationship survives in the living Fairy-Faith as one between ordinary men and the fairy-world. Therefore, almost all taboos surviving among Celts ought to be interpreted psychologically or even psychically, and not as ordinary social regulations.

### **Food-Sacrifice**

Food-sacrifice plays a very important rôle in the modern Fairy-Faith, being still practised, as our evidence shows, in each one of the Celtic countries. Without any doubt it is a survival from pagan times, when, as we shall observe later (in chapter iv, 291, and elsewhere), propitiatory offerings were regularly made to the Tuatha De Danann as gods of the earth, and, apparently, to other orders of spiritual beings. The anthropological significance of such food-sacrifice is unmistakable.

With the same propitiatory ends in view as modern Celts now have in offering food to fairies, ancient peoples, e.g. the Greeks and Romans, maintained a state ritual of sacrifices to the gods, genii, daemons, and to the dead. And such sacrifices, so essential a part of most ancient religions, were based on the belief, as stated by Porphyry in his *Treatise Concerning Abstinence*, that all the various orders of gods, genii or daemons, enjoy as nourishment the odour of burnt offerings. And like the Fairy-Folk, the daemons of the air live not on the gross substance of food, but on its finer



invisible essences, conveyed to them most easily on the altar-fire.<sup>217</sup> Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, and other leading Greeks, as well as the Romans of a like metaphysical school, unite in declaring the fundamental importance to the welfare of the State of regular sacrifices to the gods and to the daemons who control all natural phenomena, since they caused, if not neglected, abundant harvests and national prosperity. For unto the gods is due by right a part of all things which they give to man for his happiness.

The relation which the worship of ancestors held to that of the gods above, who are the Olympian Gods, the great Gods, and to the Gods below, who are the Gods of the Dead, and also to the daemons, and heroes or divine ancestors, is thus set forth by Plato in his *Laws*:—‘In the first place, we affirm that next after the Olympian Gods, and the Gods of the State, honour should be given to the Gods below.... Next to these Gods, a wise man will do service to the daemons or spirits, and then to the heroes, and after them will follow the sacred places of private and ancestral Gods, having their ritual according to law. Next comes the honour of living parents.’<sup>218</sup>

It is evident from this direct testimony that the same sort of philosophy underlies food-sacrifice among the Celts and other peoples as we discovered underlying human-sacrifice, in our study of the Changeling Belief; and that the Tuatha De Danann in their true mythological nature, and fairies, their modern counterpart, correspond in all essentials to Greek and Roman gods, genii, and daemons, and are often confused with the dead.

### **The Celtic Legend of the Dead**

The animistic character of the Celtic Legend of the Dead is apparent; and the striking likenesses constantly appearing in our evidence between the ordinary apparitional fairies and the ghosts of the dead show that there is often no essential and sometimes no distinguishable difference between these two orders of beings, nor between the world of the dead and fairyland. We reserve for our chapter on *Science and Fairies* the scientific

consideration of the psychology of this relationship, and of the probability that fairies as souls of the dead and as ghosts of the dead actually exist and influence the living.

## **General Conclusion**

The chief anthropological problems connected with the modern Fairy-Faith, as our evidence presents it, have now been examined, at sufficient length, we trust, to explain their essential significance; and problems, to some extent parallel, connected with the ancient Fairy-Faith have likewise been examined. There remain, however, very many minor anthropological problems not yet touched upon; but several of the most important of these, e.g. various cults of gods, spirits, fairies, and the dead, and folk-festivals thereto related (see Section III); the circular fairy-dance (see pp. 405–6); or the fairy world as the Otherworld (see chap. vi), or as Purgatory (see chap. x), will receive consideration in following chapters, and so will certain very definite psychological problems connected with dreams, and trance-like states, with supernormal lapse of time, and with seership. We may now sum up the results so far attained.

Whether we examine the Fairy-Faith as a whole or whether we examine specialized parts of it like those relating to the smallness of fairies, to changelings, to witchcraft and magic, to exorcisms, to taboos, and to food-sacrifice, in all cases comparative folk-lore shows that the beliefs composing it find their parallels the world over, and that fairy-like beings are objects of belief now not only in Celtic countries, but in Central Australia, throughout Polynesia, in Africa, among American Red Men, in Asia generally, in Southern, Western, and Northern Europe, and, in fact, wherever civilized and primitive men hold religious beliefs. From a rationalist point of view anthropologists would be inclined to regard the bulk of this widespread belief in spiritual beings as being purely mythical, but for us to do so and stop there would lead to no satisfactory solution: the origin of myth itself needs to be explained, and one of the chief objects of

our study throughout the remainder of this book is to make an attempt at such an explanation, especially of Celtic myth.

Again, if we examine all fairy-like beings from a certain superficial point of view, or even from the mythological point of view, it is easy to discern that they are universally credited with precisely the same characters, attributes, actions, or powers as the particular peoples possess who have faith in them; and then the further fact emerges that this anthropomorphosing is due directly to the more immediate social environment: we see merely an anthropomorphically coloured picture of the whole of an age-long social evolution of the tribe, race, or nation who have fostered the particular aspect of this one world-wide folk-religion. But if we look still deeper, we discover as background to the myths and the social psychology a profound animism. This animism appears in its own environment in the shading away of the different fairy-like beings into spirits and ghosts of the departed. Going deeper yet, we find that such animistic beliefs as concern themselves exclusively with the realm of the dead are in many cases apparently so well founded on definite provable psychical experiences on the part of living men and women that the aid of science itself must be called in to explain them, and this will be done in our chapter entitled *Science and Fairies*.

So far it ought to be clear that already our evidence points to a very respectable residue in the experiences of percipients, which cannot be explained away—as can the larger mass of the evidence—as due to ethnological, anthropomorphic, naturalistic, or sociological influences on the Celtic mind; and for the present this must be designated as the  $x$  or unknown quantity in the Fairy-Faith. In chapter xi this  $x$  quantity, augmented by whatever else is to be elicited from further evidence, will be specifically discussed.

These points of view derived from our anthropological examination of the chief parts of the evidence presented by the living Fairy-Faith will be kept constantly before us as we proceed further; and what has been demonstrated anthropologically in this chapter will serve to interpret what is to follow until chapter xi is reached. With this tentative position we pass

to Section II of this study, and shall there begin to examine, as we have just done with their modern Fairy-Faith, the ancient Fairy-Faith of the Celts.

## Section II

### The Recorded Fairy-faith

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## Chapter IV

### The People of the Goddess Dana (*Tuatha Dé Danann*) or the *Sidhe* (pronounced *Shee*)<sup>219</sup>

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‘So firm was the hold which the ethnic gods of Ireland had taken upon the imagination and spiritual sensibilities of our ancestors that even the monks and christianized bards never thought of denying them. They doubtless forbade the people to worship them, but to root out the belief in their existence was so impossible that they could not even dispossess their own minds of the conviction that the gods were real supernatural beings.’—Standish O’Grady.

The Goddess Dana and the modern cult of St. Brigit—The *Tuatha De Danann* or *Sidhe* conquered by the Sons of Mil—But Irish seers still see the *Sidhe*—Old Irish MSS. faithfully represent the *Tuatha De Danann*—The *Sidhe* as a spirit race—*Sidhe* palaces—The ‘Taking’ of mortals—Hill visions of *Sidhe* women—*Sidhe* minstrels and musicians—Social organization and warfare among the *Sidhe*—The *Sidhe* war-goddesses, the *Badb*—The *Sidhe* at the Battle of Clontarf, A. D. 1014—Conclusion.

The People of the Goddess Dana, or, according to D’Arbois de Jubainville,

the People of the god whose mother was called Dana,<sup>220</sup> are the Tuatha De Danann of the ancient mythology of Ireland. The Goddess Dana, called in the genitive Danand, in middle Irish times was named Brigit.<sup>220</sup> And this goddess Brigit of the pagan Celts has been supplanted by the Christian St. Brigit<sup>220</sup>; and, in exactly the same way as the pagan cult once bestowed on the spirits in wells and fountains has been transferred to Christian saints, to whom the wells and fountains have been re-dedicated, so to St. Brigit as a national saint has been transferred the pagan cult rendered to her predecessor. Thus even yet, as in the case of the minor divinities of their sacred fountains, the Irish people through their veneration for the good St. Brigit, render homage to the divine mother of the People who bear her name Dana—who are the ever-living invisible Fairy-People of modern Ireland. For when the Sons of Mil, the ancestors of the Irish people, came to Ireland they found the Tuatha De Danann in full possession of the country. The Tuatha De Danann then retired before the invaders, without, however, giving up their sacred Island. Assuming invisibility, with the power of at any time reappearing in a human-like form before the children of the Sons of Mil, the People of the Goddess Dana became and are the Fairy-Folk, the *Sidhe* of Irish mythology and romance.<sup>221</sup> Therefore it is that to-day Ireland contains two races—a race visible which we call Celts, and a race invisible which we call Fairies. Between these two races there is constant intercourse even now; for Irish seers say that they can behold the majestic, beautiful *Sidhe*, and according to them the *Sidhe* are a race quite distinct from our own, just as living and possibly more powerful. These *Sidhe* (who are the ‘gentry’ of the Ben Bulbin country and have kindred elsewhere in Ireland, Scotland, and probably in most other countries as well, such as the invisible races of the Yosemite Valley) have been described more or less accurately by our peasant seer-witnesses from County Sligo and from North and East Ireland. But there are other and probably more reliable seers in Ireland, men of greater education and greater psychical experience, who know and describe the *Sidhe* races as they really are, and who even sketch their likenesses. And to such seer Celts as these, Death is a passport to the world

of the *Sidhe*, a world where there is eternal youth and never-ending joy, as we shall learn when we study it as the Celtic Otherworld.

The recorded mythology and literature of ancient Ireland have, very faithfully for the most part, preserved to us clear pictures of the Tuatha De Danann; so that disregarding some Christian influence in the texts of certain manuscripts, much rationalization, and a good deal of poetical colouring and romantic imagination in the pictures, we can easily describe the People of the Goddess Dana as they appeared in pagan days, when they were more frequently seen by mortals than now. Perhaps the Irish folk of the olden times were even more clairvoyant and spiritual-minded than the Irish folk of to-day. So by drawing upon these written records let us try to understand what sort of beings the *Sidhe* were and are.

### **Nature of the *Sidhe***

In the *Book of Leinster*<sup>222</sup> the poem of *Eochaid* records that the Tuatha De Danann, the conquerors of the Fir-Bolgs, were hosts of *siabra*; and *siabra* is an Old Irish word meaning fairies, sprites, or ghosts. The word fairies is appropriate if restricted to mean fairies like the modern ‘gentry’; but the word *ghosts* is inappropriate, because our evidence shows that the only relation the *Sidhe* or real Fairies hold to ghosts is a superficial one, the *Sidhe* and ghosts being alike only in respect to invisibility. In the two chief Irish MSS., the *Book of the Dun Cow* and the *Book of Leinster*, the Tuatha De Danann are described as ‘gods and not-gods’; and Sir John Rhys considers this an ancient formula comparable with the Sanskrit *deva* and *adeva*, but not with ‘poets (*dée*) and husbandmen (*an dée*)’ as the author of *Cóir Anmann* learnedly guessed.<sup>223</sup> It is also said, in the *Book of the Dun Cow*, that wise men do not know the origin of the Tuatha De Danann, but that ‘it seems likely to them that they came from heaven, on account of their intelligence and for the excellence of their knowledge’.<sup>224</sup> The hold of the Tuatha De Danann on the Irish mind and spirit was so strong that even Christian transcribers of texts could not deny their existence as a non-

human race of intelligent beings inhabiting Ireland, even though they frequently misrepresented them by placing them on the level of evil demons,<sup>225</sup> as the ending of the story of the *Sick-Bed of Cuchulainn* illustrates:—‘So that this was a vision to Cuchulainn of being stricken by the people of the *Sid*: for the demoniac power was great before the faith; and such was its greatness that the demons used to fight bodily against mortals, and they used to show them delights and secrets of how they would be in immortality. It was thus they used to be believed in. So it is to such phantoms the ignorant apply the names of *Side* and *Aes Side*.’<sup>226</sup> A passage in the *Silva Gadelica* (ii. 202–3) not only tends to confirm this last statement, but it also shows that the Irish people made a clear distinction between the god-race and our own:—In *The Colloquy with the Ancients*, as St. Patrick and Caeilte are talking with one another, ‘a lone woman robed in mantle of green, a smock of soft silk being next her skin, and on her forehead a glittering plate of yellow gold,’ came to them; and when Patrick asked from whence she came, she replied: ‘Out of *uaimh Chruachna*, or “the cave of Cruachan”.’ Caeilte then asked: ‘Woman, my soul, who art thou?’ ‘I am *Scothniamh* or “Flower-lustre”, daughter of the Daghdha’s son Bodhb derg.’ Caeilte proceeded: ‘And what started thee hither?’ ‘To require of thee my marriage-gift, because once upon a time thou promisedst me such.’ And as they parleyed Patrick broke in with: ‘It is a wonder to us how we see you two: the girl young and invested with all comeliness; but thou Caeilte, a withered ancient, bent in the back and dingily grown grey.’ ‘Which is no wonder at all,’ said Caeilte, ‘for no people of one generation or of one time are we: *she is of the Tuatha Dé Danann, who are unfading and whose duration is perennial; I am of the sons of Milesius, that are perishable and fade away*.’ The exact distinction is between Caeilte, a withered old ancient—in most ways to be regarded as a ghost called up that Patrick may question him about the past history of Ireland—and a fairy-woman who is one of the *Sidhe* or Tuatha De Danann.<sup>227</sup>

In two of the more ancient Irish texts, the *Echtra Nerai*<sup>228</sup> or ‘Expedition of Nera’, a preliminary tale in the introduction to the *Táin bó Cuailnge* or ‘Theft of the Cattle of Cuailnge’; and a passage from the *Togail*



*Bruidne dâ Derga*, or ‘Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel’,<sup>229</sup> there seems no reasonable doubt whatever about the Tuatha De Danann or *Sidhe* being a race like what we call spirits. The first text describes how Ailill and Medb in their palace of Cruachan celebrated the feast of *Samain* (November Eve, a feast of the dead even in pre-Christian times). Two culprits had been executed on the day before, and their bodies, according to the ancient Irish custom, were left hanging from a tree until the night of *Samain* should have passed; for on that night it was dangerous to touch the bodies of the dead while demons and the people of the *Sidhe* were at large throughout all Ireland, and mortals found near dead bodies at such a time were in great danger of being *taken* by these spirit hosts of the Tuatha De Danann. And so on this very night, when thick darkness had settled down, Ailill desired to test the courage of his warriors, and offered his own gold-hilted sword to any young man who would go out and tie a coil of twisted twigs around the leg of one of the bodies suspended from the tree. After many had made the attempt and failed, because unable to brave the legions of demons and fairies, Nera alone succeeded; but his success cost him dear, for he finally fell under the power both of the dead man, round whose legs he had tied the coil, and of an elfin host: with the dead man’s body on his back, Nera was obliged to go to a strange house that the thirst of the dead man might be assuaged therein; and the dead man in drinking scattered ‘the last sip from his lips at the faces of the people that were in the house, so that they all died’. Nera carried back the body; and on returning to Cruachan he saw the fairy hosts going into the cave, ‘for the fairy-mounds of Erin are always opened about Halloween.’ Nera followed after them until he came to their king in a palace of the Tuatha De Danann, seemingly in the cavern or elsewhere underground; where he remained and was married to one of the fairy women. She it was who revealed to Nera the secret hiding-place, in a mysterious well, of the king’s golden crown, and then betrayed her whole people by reporting to Nera the plan they had for attacking Ailill’s court on the Halloween to come. Moreover, Nera was permitted by his fairy wife to depart from the *síd*; and he in taking leave of her asked: ‘How will it be believed of me that I have gone into the *síd*?’ ‘Take fruits of summer with

thee,' said the woman. 'Then he took wild garlic with him and primrose and golden fern.' And on the following November Eve when the *síd* of Cruachan was again open, 'the men of Connaught and the black hosts of exile' under Ailill and Medb plundered it, taking away from it the crown of Briun out of the well. But 'Nera was left with his people in the *síd*, and has not come out until now, nor will he come till Doom.'

All of this matter is definitely enough in line with the living Fairy-Faith: there is the same belief expressed as now about November Eve being the time of all times when ghosts, demons, spirits, and fairies are free, and when fairies *take* mortals and marry them to fairy women; also the beliefs that fairies are living in secret places in hills, in caverns, or under ground—palaces full of treasure and open only on November Eve. In so far as the real fairies, the *Sidhe*, are concerned, they appear as the rulers of the Feast of the Dead or *Samain*, as the controllers of all spirits who are then at large; and, allowing for some poetical imagination and much social psychology and anthropomorphism, elements as common in this as in most literary descriptions concerning the Tuatha De Danann, they are faithfully enough presented.

The second text describes how King Conaire, in riding along a road toward Tara, saw in front of him three strange horsemen, three men of the *Sidhe*:—'Three red frocks had they, and three red mantles: three red steeds they bestrode, and three red heads of hair were on them. Red were they all, both body and hair and raiment, both steeds and men.' 'Who is it that fares before us?' asked Conaire. 'It was a taboo of mine for those Three to go before me—the three Reds to the house of Red. Who will follow them and tell them to come towards me in my track?' 'I will follow them,' says Lé fri flaith, Conaire's son. 'He goes after them, lashing his horse, and overtook them not. There was the length of a spearcast between them: but they did not gain upon him and he did not gain upon them.' All attempts to come up with the red horsemen failed. But at last, before they disappeared, one of the Three said to the king's son riding so furiously behind them, 'Lo, my son, great the news. Weary are the steeds we ride. We ride the steeds of Donn Tetscorach (?) from the elfmounds. Though we are alive we are dead.

Great are the signs: destruction of life: sating of ravens: feeding of crows, strife of slaughter: wetting of sword-edge, shields with broken bosses in hours after sundown. Lo, my son!’ Then they disappear. When Conaire and his followers heard the message, fear fell upon them, and the king said: ‘All my taboos have seized me to-night, since those Three [Reds] [are the] banished folks (?).’ In this passage we behold three horsemen of the *Sidhe* banished from their elfmound because guilty of falsehood. Visible for a time, they precede the king and so violate one of his taboos; and then delivering their fearful prophecy they vanish. These three of the Tuatha De Danann, majestic and powerful and weird in their mystic red, are like the warriors of the ‘gentry’ seen by contemporary seers in West Ireland. Though dead, that is in an invisible world like the dead, yet they are living. It seems that in all three of the textual examples already cited, the scribe has emphasized a different element in the unique nature of the Tuatha De Danann. In the *Colloquy* it is their eternal youth and beauty, in the *Echtra Nerai* it is their supremacy over ghosts and demons on *Samain* and their power to steal mortals away at such a time, and in this last their respect for honesty. And in each case their portrayal corresponds to that of the ‘gentry’ and *Sidhe* by modern Irishmen; so that the old Fairy-Faith and the new combine to prove the People of the God whose mother was Dana to have been and to be a race of beings who are like mortals, but not mortals, who to the objective world are as though dead, yet to the subjective world are fully living and conscious.

O’Curry says:—‘The term (*sídh*, pron. *shee*), as far as we know it, is always applied in old writings to the palaces, courts, halls, or residences of those beings which in ancient Gaedhelic mythology held the place which ghosts, phantoms, and fairies hold in the superstitions of the present day.’<sup>230</sup> In modern Irish tradition, ‘the People of the *Sidhe*,’ or simply the *Sidhe*, refer to the beings themselves rather than to their places of habitation. Partly perhaps on account of this popular opinion that the *Sidhe* are a subterranean race, they are sometimes described as gods of the earth or *dei terreni*, as in the *Book of Armagh*; and since it was believed that they, like the modern fairies, control the ripening of crops and the milk-giving of

cows, the ancient Irish rendered to them regular worship and sacrifice, just as the Irish of to-day do by setting out food at night for the fairy-folk to eat.

Thus after their conquest, these *Sidhe* or Tuatha De Danann in retaliation, and perhaps to show their power as agricultural gods, destroyed the wheat and milk of their conquerors, the Sons of Mil, as fairies to-day can do; and the Sons of Mil were constrained to make a treaty with their supreme king, Dagda, who, in *Cóir Anmann* (§ 150), is himself called an earth-god. Then when the treaty was made the Sons of Mil were once more able to gather wheat in their fields and to drink the milk of their cows;<sup>231</sup> and we can suppose that ever since that time their descendants, who are the people of Ireland, remembering that treaty, have continued to reverence the People of the Goddess Dana by pouring libations of milk to them and by making them offerings of the fruits of the earth.

### **The Palaces of the *Sidhe***

The marvellous palaces to which the Tuatha De Danann retired when conquered by the race of Mil were hidden in the depths of the earth, in hills, or under ridges more or less elevated.<sup>232</sup> At the time of their conquest, Dagda their high king made a distribution of all such palaces in his kingdom. He gave one *síd* to Lug, son of Ethne, another to Ogme; and for himself retained two—one called *Brug na Boinne*, or Castle of the Boyne, because it was situated on or near the River Boyne near Tara, and the other called *Síd* or *Brug Maic ind Oc*, which means Enchanted Palace or Castle of the Son of the Young. And this Mac ind Oc was Dagda's own son by the queen Boann, according to some accounts, so that as the name (Son of the Young) signifies, Dagda and Boann, both immortals, both Tuatha De Danann, were necessarily always young, never knowing the touch of disease, or decay, or old age. Not until Christianity gained its psychic triumph at Tara, through the magic of Patrick prevailing against the magic of the Druids—who seem to have stood at that time as mediators between the People of the Goddess Dana and the pagan Irish—did the Tuatha De

Danann lose their immortal youthfulness in the eyes of mortals and become subject to death. In the most ancient manuscripts of Ireland the pre-Christian doctrine of the immortality of the divine race ‘persisted intact and without restraint’;<sup>233</sup> but in the *Senchus na relec* or ‘History of the Cemeteries’, from the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*, and in the *Leabar gabala* or ‘Book of the Conquests’, from the *Book of Leinster*, it was completely changed by the Christian scribes.<sup>233</sup>

When Dagda thus distributed the underground palaces, Mac ind Oc, or as he was otherwise called Oengus, was absent and hence forgotten. So when he returned, naturally he complained to his father, and the *Brug na Boinne*, the king’s own residence, was ceded to him for a night and a day, but Oengus maintained that it was for ever. This palace was a most marvellous one: it contained three trees which always bore fruit, a vessel full of excellent drink, and two pigs—one alive and the other nicely cooked ready to eat at any time; and in this palace no one ever died.<sup>234</sup> In the *Colloquy*, Caeilte tells of a mountain containing a fairy palace which no man save Finn and six companions, Caeilte being one of these, ever entered. The Fenians, while hunting, were led thither by a fairy woman who had changed her shape to that of a fawn in order to allure them; and the night being wild and snowy they were glad to take shelter therein. Beautiful damsels and their lovers were the inhabitants of the palace; in it there was music and abundance of food and drink; and on its floor stood a chair of crystal.<sup>235</sup> In another fairy palace, the enchanted cave of Keshcorran, Conaran, son of Imidel, a chief of the Tuatha De Danann, had sway; ‘and so soon as he perceived that the hounds’ cry now sounded deviously, he bade his three daughters (that were full of sorcery) to go and take vengeance on Finn for his hunting’<sup>236</sup>—just as nowadays the ‘good people’ take vengeance on one of our race if a fairy domain is violated. Frequently the fairy palace is under a lake, as in the christianized story of the *Disappearance of Caencomrac*:—Once when ‘the cleric chanted his psalms, he saw [come] towards him a tall man that emerged out of the loch: from the bottom of the water that is to say.’ This tall man informed the cleric that he came from an under-water monastery, and explained ‘that

there should be subaqueous inhabiting by men is with God no harder than that they should dwell in any other place'.<sup>237</sup> In all these ancient literary accounts of the *Sidhe*-palaces we easily recognize the same sort of palaces as those described to-day by Gaelic peasants as the habitations of the 'gentry', or 'good people', or 'people of peace.' Such habitations are in mountain caverns like those of Ben Bulbin or Knock Ma, or in fairy hills or knolls like the Fairy-Hill at Aberfoyle on which Robert Kirk is believed to have been *taken*, or beneath lakes. This brings us directly to the way in which the *Sidhe* or Tuatha De Danann of the olden times *took* fine-looking young men and maidens.

### **How the *Sidhe* 'took' Mortals**

Perhaps one of the earliest and most famous literary accounts of such a *taking* is that concerning Aedh, son of Eochaid Lethderg son of the King of Leinster, who is represented as contemporary with Patrick.<sup>238</sup> While Aedh was enjoying a game of hurley with his boy companions near the *sídh* of Liamhain Softsmock, two of the *sídh*-women, who loved the young prince, very suddenly appeared, and as suddenly took him away with them into a fairy palace and kept him there three years. It happened, however, that he escaped at the end of that time, and, knowing the magical powers of Patrick, went to where the holy man was, and thus explained himself:—'Against the youths my opponents I (i.e. my side) took seven goals; but at the last one that I took, here come up to me two women clad in green mantles: two daughters of *Bodhb derg mac an Daghda*, and their names *Slad* and *Mumain*. Either of them took me by a hand, and they led me off to a garish *brugh*; whereby for now three years my people mourn after me, the *sídh*-folk caring for me ever since, and until last night I got a chance opening to escape from the *brugh*, when to the number of fifty lads we emerged out of the *sídh* and forth upon the green. Then it was that I considered the magnitude of that strait in which they of the *sídh* had had me, and away from the *brugh* I came running to seek thee, holy Patrick.'

‘That,’ said the saint, ‘shall be to thee a safeguard, so that neither their power nor their dominion shall any more prevail against thee.’ And so when Patrick had thus made Aedh proof against the power of the fairy-folk, he kept him with him under the disguise of a travelling minstrel until, arriving in Leinster, he restored him to his father the king and to his inheritance: Aedh enters the palace in his minstrel disguise; and in the presence of the royal assembly Patrick commands him: ‘Doff now once for all thy dark capacious hood, and well mayest thou wear thy father’s spear!’ When the lad removed his hood, and none there but recognized him, great was the surprise. He seemed like one come back from the dead, for long had his heirless father and people mourned for him. ‘By our word,’ exclaimed the assembly in their joyous excitement, ‘it is a good cleric’s gift!’ And the king said: ‘Holy Patrick, seeing that till this day thou hast nourished him and nurtured, let not the Tuatha De Danann’s power any more prevail against the lad.’ And Patrick answered: ‘That death which the King of Heaven and Earth hath ordained is the one that he will have.’ This ancient legend shows clearly that the Tuatha De Danann, or *Sidhe*, in the time when the scribe wrote the *Colloquy* were thought of in the same way as now, as able to *take* beautiful mortals whom they loved, and able to confer upon them fairy immortality which prevented ‘that death which the King of Heaven and Earth hath ordained’.

Mortals, did they will it, could live in the world of the *Sidhe* for ever, and we shall see this more fully in our study of the Otherworld. But here it will be interesting to learn that, unlike Aedh, whom some perhaps would call a foolish youth, Laeghaire, also a prince, for he was the son of the king of Connaught, entered a *dún* of the *Sidhe*, taking fifty other warriors with him; and he and his followers found life in Fairyland so pleasant that they all decided to enjoy it eternally. Accordingly, when they had been there a year, they planned to return to Connaught in order to bid the king and his people a final farewell. They announced their plan, and Fiachna of the *Sidhe* told them how to accomplish it safely:—‘If ye would come back take with you horses, but by no means dismount from off them’; ‘So it was done: they went their way and came upon a general assembly in which

Connaught, as at the year expired, mourned for the aforesaid warrior-band, whom now all at once they perceived above them (i.e. on higher ground). Connaught sprang to meet them, but Laeghaire cried: "Approach us not [to touch us]: 'tis to bid you farewell that we are here!" "Leave me not!" Crimthann, his father, said: "Connaught's royal power be thine; their silver and their gold, their horses with their bridles, and their noble women be at thy discretion, only leave me not!" But Laeghaire turned from them and so entered again into the *sídh*, where with Fiachna he exercises joint kingly rule; nor is he as yet come out of it.'<sup>239</sup>

### **Hill Visions of *Sidhe* Women**

There are many recorded traditions which represent certain hills as mystical places whereon men are favoured with visions of fairy women. Thus, one day King Muirchertach came forth to hunt on the border of the Brugh (near Stackallan Bridge, County Meath), and his companions left him alone on his hunting-mound. 'He had not been there long when he saw a solitary damsel beautifully formed, fair-haired, bright-skinned, with a green mantle about her sitting near him on the turfen mound; and it seemed to him that of womankind he had never beheld her equal in beauty and refinement.'<sup>240</sup> In the Mabinogion of *Pwyll, Prince of Dyvet*, which seems to be only a Brythonic treatment of an original Gaelic tale, Pwyll seating himself on a mound where any mortal sitting might see a prodigy, saw a fairy woman ride past on a white horse, and she clad in a garment of shining gold. Though he tried to have his servitor on the swiftest horse capture her, 'There was some magic about the lady that kept her always the same distance ahead, though she appeared to be riding slowly.' When on the second day Pwyll returned to the mound the fairy woman came riding by as before, and the servitor again gave unsuccessful chase. Pwyll saw her in the same manner on the third day. He thereupon gave chase himself, and when he exclaimed to her, 'For the sake of the man whom you love, wait



for me!’ she stopped; and by mutual arrangement the two agreed to meet and to marry at the end of a year.<sup>241</sup>

### **The Minstrels Or Musicians of the *Sidhe***

Not only did the fairy-folk of more ancient times enjoy wonderful palaces full of beauty and riches, and a life of eternal youth, but they also had, even as now, minstrelsy and rare music—music to which that of our own world could not be compared at all; for even Patrick himself said that it would equal the very music of heaven if it were not for ‘a twang of the fairy spell that infests it’.<sup>242</sup> And this is how it was that Patrick heard the fairy music:—As he was travelling through Ireland he once sat down on a grassy knoll, as he often did in the good old Irish way, with Ulidia’s king and nobles and Caeilte also: ‘Nor were they long there before they saw draw near them a *scológ* or “non-warrior” that wore a fair green mantle having in it a fibula of silver; a shirt of yellow silk next his skin, over and outside that again a tunic of soft satin, and with a *timpán* (a sort of harp) of the best slung on his back. “Whence comest thou, *scológ*?” asked the king. “Out of the *sídh* of the Daghada’s son Bodhb Derg, out of Ireland’s southern part.” “What moved thee out of the south, and who art thou thyself?” “I am Cascorach, son of Cainchinn that is *ollave* to the Tuatha De Danann, and am myself the makings of an *ollave* (i.e. an aspirant to the grade). What started me was the design to acquire knowledge, and information, and lore for recital, and the Fianna’s mighty deeds of valour, from Caeilte son of Ronan.” Then he took his *timpán* and made for them music and minstrelsy, so that he sent them slumbering off to sleep.’ And Cascorach’s music was pleasing to Patrick, who said of it: ‘Good indeed it were, but for a twang of the fairy spell that infests it; barring which nothing could more nearly than it resemble Heaven’s harmony.’<sup>243</sup> And that very night which followed the day on which the *ollave* to the Tuatha De Danann came to them was the Eve of *Samain*. There was also another of these fairy *timpán*-players called ‘the wondrous elfin man’, ‘Aillén mac Midhna of the Tuatha De Danann,

that out of *sídh* Finnachaidh to the northward used to come to Tara: the manner of his coming being with a musical *timpán* in his hand, the which whenever any heard he would at once sleep. Then, all being lulled thus, out of his mouth Aillén would emit a blast of fire. It was on the solemn *Samain*-Day (November Day) he came in every year, played his *timpán*, and to the fairy music that he made all hands would fall asleep. With his breath he used to blow up the flame and so, during a three-and-twenty years' spell, yearly burnt up Tara with all her gear.' And it is said that Finn, finally overcoming the magic of Aillén, slew him.<sup>243</sup>

Perhaps in the first musician, Cascorach, though he is described as the son of a Tuatha De Danann minstrel, we behold a mortal like one of the many Irish pipers and musicians who used to go, or even go yet, to the fairy-folk to be educated in the musical profession, and then come back as the most marvellous players that ever were in Ireland; though if Cascorach were once a mortal it seems that he has been quite transformed in bodily nature so as to be really one of the Tuatha De Danann himself. But Aillén mac Midhna is undoubtedly one of the mighty 'gentry' who could—as we heard from County Sligo—destroy half the human race if they wished. Aillén visits Tara, the old psychic centre both for Ireland's high-kings and its Druids. He comes as it were against the conquerors of his race, who in their neglectfulness no longer render due worship and sacrifice on the Feast of *Samain* to the Tuatha De Danann, the gods of the dead, at that time supreme; and then it is that he works his magic against the royal palaces of the kings and Druids on the ancient Hill. And to overcome the magic of Aillén and slay him, that is, make it impossible for him to repeat his annual visits to Tara, it required the might of the great hero Finn, who himself was related to the same *Sidhe* race, for by a woman of the Tuatha De Danann he had his famous son Ossian (Oisín).<sup>244</sup>

In *Gilla dé*, who is Manannan mac Lir, the greatest magician of the Tuatha De Danann, disguised as a being who can disappear in the twinkling of an eye whenever he wishes, and reappear unexpectedly as a 'kern that wore garb of yellow stripes', we meet with another fairy musician. And to him O'Donnell says:—'By Heaven's grace again, since first I heard the

fame of them that within the hills and under the earth beneath us make the fairy music,... music sweeter than thy strains I have never heard; thou art in sooth a most melodious rogue!’<sup>245</sup> And again it is said of him:—‘Then the *gilla decair* taking a harp played music so sweet... and the king after a momentary glance at his own musicians never knew which way he went from him.’<sup>246</sup>

### **Social Organization and Warfare among the *Sidhe***

So far, we have seen only the happy side of the life of the *Sidhe*-folk—their palaces and pleasures and music; but there was a more human (or anthropomorphic) side to their nature in which they wage war on one another, and have their matrimonial troubles even as we moderns. And we turn now to examine this other side of their life, to behold the *Sidhe* as a warlike race; and as we do so let us remember that the ‘gentry’ in the Ben Bulbin country and in all Ireland, and the people of Finvara in Knock Ma, and also the invisible races of California, are likewise described as given to war and mighty feats of arms.

The invisible Irish races have always had a very distinct social organization, so distinct in fact that Ireland can be divided according to its fairy kings and fairy queens and their territories even now;<sup>247</sup> and no doubt we see in this how the ancient Irish anthropomorphically projected into an animistic belief their own social conditions and racial characteristics. And this social organization and territorial division ought to be understood before we discuss the social troubles and consequent wars of the *Sidhe*-folk. For example in Munster Bodb was king and his enchanted palace was called the *Síd* of the Men of Femen;<sup>248</sup> and we already know about the over-king Dagda and his Boyne palace near Tara. In more modern times, especially in popular fairy-traditions, Eevil or Eevinn (*Aoibhill* or *Aoibhinn*) of the *Craig Liath* or Grey Rock is a queen of the Munster fairies;<sup>249</sup> and Finvara is king of the Connaught fairies (see p. 42). There are also the Irish

fairy-queens Cleona (*Cliodhna*, or in an earlier form *Clidna* [cf. p. 356]) and Aine (see p. 79 above).

We are now prepared to see the Tuatha De Danann in their domestic troubles and wars; and the following story is as interesting as any, for in it Dagda himself is the chief actor. Once when his own son Oengus fell sick of a love malady, King Dagda, who ruled all the *Sidhe*-folk in Ireland, joined forces with Ailill and Medb in order to compel Ethal Anbual to deliver up his beautiful daughter Caer whom Oengus loved. When Ethal Anbual's palace had been stormed and Ethal Anbual reduced to submission, he declared he had no power over his daughter Caer, for on the first of November each year, he said, she changed to a swan, or from a swan to a maiden again. 'The first of November next,' he added, 'my daughter will be under the form of a swan, near the Loch bel Dracon. Marvellous birds will be seen there: my daughter will be surrounded by a hundred and fifty other swans.' When the November Day arrived, Oengus went to the lake, and, seeing the swans and recognizing Caer, plunged into the water and instantly became a swan with her. While under the form of swans, Oengus and Caer went together to the Boyne palace of the king Dagda, his father, and remained there; and their singing was so sweet that all who heard it slept three days and three nights.<sup>250</sup> In this story, new elements in the nature of the *Sidhe* appear, though like modern ones: the *Sidhe* are able to assume other forms than their own, are subject to enchantments like mortals; and when under the form of swans are in some perhaps superficial aspects like the swan-maidens in stories which are world-wide, and their swan-song has the same sweetness and magical effect as in other countries.<sup>251</sup>

In the Rennes *Dinnshenchas* there is a tale about a war among the 'men of the Elfmounds' over 'two lovable maidens who dwelt in the elfmound', and when they delivered the battle 'they all shaped themselves into the shapes of deer'.<sup>252</sup> Midir's sons under Donn mac Midir, in rebellion against the Daghdha's son Bodh Derg, fled away to an obscure *sídh*, where in yearly battle they met the hosts of the other Tuatha De Danann under Bodh Derg; and it was into this *sídh* or fairy palace on the very eve before the annual contest that Finn and his six companions were enticed by the fairy woman

in the form of a fawn, to secure their aid.<sup>253</sup> And in another tale, Laeghaire, son of the king of Connaught, with fifty warriors, plunged into a lake to the fairy world beneath it, in order to assist the fairy man, who came thence to them, to recover his wife stolen by a rival.<sup>253</sup>

### **The *Sidhe* as War-Goddesses or the *Badb***

It is in the form of birds that certain of the Tuatha De Danann appear as war-goddesses and directors of battle,<sup>254</sup>—and we learn from one of our witnesses (p. 46) that the ‘gentry’ or modern *Sidhe*-folk take sides even now in a great war, like that between Japan and Russia. It is in their relation to the hero Cuchulainn that one can best study the People of the Goddess Dana in their rôle as controllers of human war. In the greatest of the Irish epics, the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, where Cuchulainn is under their influence, these war-goddesses are called *Badb*<sup>255</sup> (or *Bodb*) which here seems to be a collective term for *Neman*, *Macha*, and *Morrighu* (or *Morrigan*)<sup>256</sup>—each of whom exercises a particular supernatural power. *Neman* appears as the confounder of armies, so that friendly bands, bereft of their senses by her, slaughter one another; *Macha* is a fury that riots and revels among the slain; while *Morrighu*, the greatest of the three, by her presence infuses superhuman valour into Cuchulainn, nerves him for the cast, and guides the course of his unerring spear. And the Tuatha De Danann in infusing this valour into the great hero show themselves—as we already know them to be on *Samain* Eve—the rulers of all sorts of demons of the air and awful spirits:—In the *Book of Leinster* (fol. 57, B 2) it is recorded that ‘the satyrs, and sprites, and maniacs of the valleys, and demons of the air, shouted about him, for the Tuatha De Danann were wont to impart their valour to him, in order that he might be more feared, more dreaded, more terrible, in every battle and battle-field, in every combat and conflict, into which he went.’

The Battles of Moytura seem in most ways to be nothing more than the traditional record of a long warfare to determine the future spiritual control of Ireland, carried on between two diametrically opposed orders of invisible

beings, the Tuatha De Danann representing the gods of light and good and the Fomorians representing the gods of darkness and evil. It is said that after the second of these battles ‘The *Morrighu*, daughter of Ernmas (the Irish war-goddess), proceeded to proclaim that battle and the mighty victory which had taken place, to the royal heights of Ireland and to its fairy host and its chief waters and its river-mouths’.<sup>257</sup> For good had prevailed over evil, and it was settled that all Ireland should for ever afterwards be a sacred country ruled over by the People of the Goddess Dana and the Sons of Mil jointly. So that here we see the Tuatha De Danann with their war-goddess fighting their own battles in which human beings play no part.

It is interesting to observe that this Irish war-goddess, the *bodb* or *badb*, considered of old to be one of the Tuatha De Danann, has survived to our own day in the fairy-lore of the chief Celtic countries. In Ireland the survival is best seen in the popular and still almost general belief among the peasantry that the fairies often exercise their magical powers under the form of royston-crows; and for this reason these birds are always greatly dreaded and avoided. The resting of one of them on a peasant’s cottage may signify many things, but often it means the death of one of the family or some great misfortune, the bird in such a case playing the part of a *bean-sidhe* (banshee). And this folk-belief finds its echo in the recorded tales of Wales, Scotland, and Brittany. In the *Mabinogi*, ‘Dream of Rhonabwy,’ Owain, prince of Rheged and a contemporary of Arthur, has a wonderful crow which always secures him victory in battle by the aid of three hundred other crows under its leadership. In Campbell’s *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* the fairies very often exercise their power in the form of the common hooded crow; and in Brittany there is a folk-tale entitled ‘*Les Compagnons*’<sup>258</sup> in which the chief actor is a fairy under the form of a magpie who lives in a royal forest just outside Rennes.<sup>259</sup>

W. M. Hennessy has shown that the word *bodb* or *badb*, aspirated *bodhbh* or *badhbh* (pronounced *bov* or *bav*), originally signified rage, fury, or violence, and ultimately implied a witch, fairy, or goddess; and that as the memory of this Irish goddess of war survives in folk-lore, her emblem is the well-known scald-crow, or royston-crow.<sup>260</sup> By referring to Peter

O'Connell's *Irish Dictionary* we are able to confirm this popular belief which identifies the battle-fairies with the royston-crow, and to discover that there is a definite relationship or even identification between the *Badb* and the *Bean-sidhe* or banshee, as there is in modern Irish folk-lore between the royston-crow and the fairy who announces a death. *Badb-catha* is made to equal 'Fionog, a royston-crow, a squall crow'; *Badb* is defined as a '*bean-sidhe*, a female fairy, phantom, or spectre, supposed to be attached to certain families, and to appear sometimes in the form of squall-crows, or royston-crows'; and the *Badb* in the three-fold aspect is thus explained: '*Macha*, i.e. a royston-crow; *Morrighain*, i.e. the great fairy; *Neamhan*, i.e. *Badb catha nó feannóg*; *a badb catha*, or royston-crow.' Similar explanations are given by other glossarists, and thus the evidence of etymological scholarship as well as that of folk-lore support the Psychological Theory.

### **The *Sidhe* in the Battle of Clontarf, a. d. 1014**

The People of the Goddess Dana played an important part in human warfare even so late as the Battle of Clontarf, fought near Dublin, April 23, 1014; and at that time fairy women and phantom-hosts were to the Irish unquestionable existences, as real as ordinary men and women. It is recorded in the manuscript story of the battle, of which numerous copies exist, that the fairy woman Aoibheall<sup>261</sup> came to Dunlang O'Hartigan before the battle and begged him not to fight, promising him life and happiness for two hundred years if he would put off fighting for a single day; but the patriotic Irishman expressed his decision to fight for Ireland, and then the fairy woman foretold how he and his friend Murrough, and Brian and Conaing and all the nobles of Erin and even his own son Turlough, were fated to fall in the conflict.

On the eve of the battle, Dunlang comes to his friend Murrough directly from the fairy woman; and Murrough upon seeing him reproaches him for his absence in these words:—'Great must be the love and attachment of

some woman for thee which has induced thee to abandon me.’ ‘Alas O King,’ answered Dunlang, ‘the delight which I have abandoned for thee is greater, if thou didst but know it, namely, life without death, without cold, without thirst, without hunger, without decay, beyond any delight of the delights of the earth to me, until the judgement, and heaven after the judgement; and if I had not pledged my word to thee I would not have come here; and, moreover, it is fated for me to die on the day that thou shalt die.’ When Murrough has heard this terrible message, the prophecy of his own death in the battle, despondency seizes him; and then it is that he declares that he for Ireland like Dunlang for honour has also sacrificed the opportunity of entering and living in that wonderful Land of Eternal Youth: —‘Often was I offered in hills, and in fairy mansions, this world (the fairy world) and these gifts, but I never abandoned for one night my country nor mine inheritance for them.’<sup>262</sup>

And thus is described the meeting of the two armies at Clontarf, and the demons of the air and the phantoms, and all the hosts of the invisible world who were assembled to scatter confusion and to revel in the bloodshed, and how above them in supremacy rose the *Badb*:—‘It will be one of the wonders of the day of judgement to relate the description of this tremendous onset. There arose a wild, impetuous, precipitate, mad, inexorable, furious, dark, lacerating, merciless, combative, contentious *badb*, which was shrieking and fluttering over their heads. And there arose also the satyrs, and sprites, and the maniacs of the valleys, and the witches, and goblins, and owls, and destroying demons of the air and firmament, and the demoniac phantom host; and they were inciting and sustaining valour and battle with them.’<sup>263</sup> It is said of Murrough (*Murchadh*) as he entered the thick of the fight and prepared to assail the foreign invaders, the Danes, when they had repulsed the Dal-Cais, that ‘he was seized with a boiling terrible anger, an excessive elevation and greatness of spirit and mind. A bird of valour and championship rose in him, and fluttered over his head and on his breath’.<sup>264</sup>



## Conclusion

The recorded or manuscript Fairy-Faith of the Gaels corresponds in all essentials with the living Gaelic Fairy-Faith: the Tuatha De Danann or *Sidhe*, the ‘Gentry’, the ‘Good People’, and the ‘People of Peace’ are described as a race of invisible divine beings eternally young and unfading. They inhabit fairy palaces, enjoy rare feasts and love-making, and have their own music and minstrelsy. They are essentially majestic in their nature; they wage war in their own invisible realm against other of its inhabitants like the ancient Fomorians; they frequently direct human warfare or nerve the arm of a great hero like Cuchulainn; and demons of the air, spirit hosts, and awful unseen creatures obey them. Mythologically they are gods of light and good, able to control natural phenomena so as to make harvests come forth abundantly or not at all. But they are not such mythological beings as we read about in scholarly dissertations on mythology, dissertations so learned in their curious and unreasonable and often unintelligible hypotheses about the workings of the mind among primitive men. The way in which social psychology has deeply affected all such animistic beliefs was pointed out above in chapter iii. In chapter xi, entitled *Science and Fairies*, our position with respect to the essential nature of the fairy races will be made clear.

## Chapter V

### Brythonic Divinities and the Brythonic Fairy-faith<sup>265</sup>

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‘On the one hand we have the man Arthur, whose position we have tried to define, and on the other a greater Arthur, a more colossal figure, of which we have, so to speak, but a *torso* rescued from the wreck of the Celtic pantheon.’—The Right Hon. Sir John Rhys.

The god Arthur and the hero Arthur—Sevenfold evidence to show Arthur as an incarnate fairy king—Lancelot the foster-son of a fairy woman—Galahad the offspring of Lancelot and the fairy woman Elayne—Arthur as a fairy king in *Kulhwch and Olwen*—Gwynn ab Nudd—Arthur like Dagda, and like Osiris—Brythonic fairy-romances: their evolution and antiquity—Arthur in Nennius, Geoffrey, Wace, and in Layamon—Cambrensis' Otherworld tale—Norman-French writers of twelfth and thirteenth centuries—*Romans d'Aventure* and *Romans Bretons*—Origins of the 'Matter of Britain'—Fairy-romance episodes in Welsh literature—Brythonic origins.

## **Arthur and Arthurian Mythology**

As we have just considered the Gaelic Divinities in their character as the Fairy-Folk of popular Gaelic tradition, so now we proceed to consider the Brythonic Divinities in the same way, beginning with the greatest of them all, Arthur. Even a superficial acquaintance with the Arthurian Legend shows how impossible it is to place upon it any one interpretation to the exclusion of other interpretations, for in one aspect Arthur is a Brythonic divinity and in another a sixth-century Brythonic chieftain. But the explanation of this double aspect seems easy enough when we regard the historical Arthur as a great hero, who, exactly as in so many parallel cases of national hero-worship, came—within a comparatively short time—to be enshrined in the imagination of the patriotic Brythons with all the attributes anciently belonging to a great Celtic god called Arthur.<sup>266</sup> The hero and the god were first confused, and then identified,<sup>267</sup> and hence arose that wonderful body of romance which we call Arthurian, and which has become the glory of English literature.

Arthur in the character of a culture hero,<sup>268</sup> with god-like powers to instruct mortals in wisdom, and, also, as a being in some way related to the sun—as a sun-god perhaps—can well be considered the human-divine institutor of the mystic brotherhood known as the Round Table. We ought, probably, to consider Arthur, like Cuchulainn, as a god incarnate in a human body for the purpose of educating the race of men; and thus, while living as a man, related definitely and, apparently, consciously to the invisible gods or fairy-folk. Among the Aztecs and Peruvians in the New World, there was a widespread belief that great heroes who had once been men have now their celestial abode in the sun, and from time to time reincarnate to become teachers of their less developed brethren of our own race; and a belief of the same character existed among the Egyptians and other peoples of the Old World, including the Celts. It will be further shown, in our study of the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth, that anciently among the Gaels and Brythons such heroes as Cuchulainn and Arthur were also considered reincarnate sun-divinities. As a being related to the sun, as a sun-god, Arthur is like Osiris, the Great Being, who with his brotherhood of great heroes and god-companions enters daily the underworld or Hades to battle against the demons and forces of evil,<sup>269</sup> even as the Tuatha De Danann battled against the Fomors. And the most important things in the traditions of the great Brythonic hero connect him directly with this strange world of subjectivity. First of all, his own father, Uthr Bendragon,<sup>270</sup> was a king of Hades, so that Arthur himself, being his child, is a direct descendant of this Otherworld. Second, the Arthurian Legend traces the origin of the Round Table back to Arthur's father, Hades being 'the realm whence all culture was fabled to have been derived'.<sup>271</sup> Third, the name of Arthur's wife, Gwenhwyvar, resolves itself into White Phantom or White Apparition, in harmony with Arthur's line of descent from the region of phantoms and apparitions and fairy-folk. Thus:—*Gwenhwyvar* or *Gwenhwyfar* equals *Gwen* or *Gwenn*, a Brythonic word meaning white, and *hwyvar*, a word not found in the Brythonic dialects, but undoubtedly cognate with the Irish word *siabhradh*, a fairy, equal to *siabhra*, *siabrae*, *siabur*, a fairy, or ghost, the Welsh and the Irish word going back to the form *\*seibaro*.<sup>272</sup> Hence the name of Arthur's

wife means the *white ghost* or *white phantom*, quite in keeping with the nature of the Tuatha De Danann and that of the fairy-folk of Wales or *Tylwyth Teg*—the ‘Fair Family’.

Fourth, as a link in the chain of evidence connecting Arthur with the invisible world where the Fairy-People live, his own sister is called *Morgan le Fay* in the romances,<sup>273</sup> and is thus definitely one of the fairy women who, according to tradition, are inhabitants of the Celtic Otherworld sometimes known as Avalon. Fifth, in the Welsh Triads,<sup>274</sup> Llacheu, the son of Arthur and Gwenhwyvar, is credited with clairvoyant vision, like the fairy-folk, so that he understands the secret nature of all solid and material things; and ‘the story of his death as given in the second part of the Welsh version of the Grail, makes him hardly human at all.’<sup>275</sup> Sixth, the name of Melwas, the abductor of Arthur’s wife, is shown by Sir John Rhys to mean a prince-youth or a princely youth, and the same authority considers it probable that, as such, Melwas or Maelwas was a being endowed with eternal youth—even as Midir, the King of the Tuatha De Danann, who though a thousand years old appeared handsome and youthful. So it seems that the abduction of Gwenhwyfar was really a fairy abduction, such as we read about in the domestic troubles of the Irish fairy-folk, on a level with the abduction of Etain by her Otherworld husband Midir.<sup>276</sup> And in keeping with this superhuman character of the abductor of the White Phantom or Fairy, Chrétien de Troyes, in his metrical romance *Le Conte de la Charrette*, describes the realm of which Melwas was lord as a place whence no traveller returns.<sup>277</sup> As further proof that the realm of Melwas was meant by Chrétien to be the subjective world, where the god-like Tuatha De Danann, the *Tylwyth Teg*, and the shades of the dead equally exist, it is said that access to it was by two narrow bridges; ‘one called *li Ponz Evages* or the Water Bridge, because it was a narrow passage a foot and a half wide and as much in height, with water above and below it as well as on both sides’; the other *li Ponz de l’Espée* or the Sword Bridge, because it consisted of the edge of a sword two lances in length.<sup>278</sup> The first bridge, considered less perilous than the other, was chosen by Gauvain (Gwalchmei), when with Lancelot he was seeking to rescue Gwenhwyfar;

but he failed to cross it. Lancelot with great trouble crossed the second. In many mythologies and in world-wide folk-tales there is a narrow bridge or bridges leading to the realm of the dead. Even Mohammed in the *Koran* declares it necessary to cross a bridge as thin as a hair, if one would enter Paradise. And in living folk-lore in Celtic countries, as we found among the Irish peasantry, the crossing of a bridge or stream of water when pursued by fairies or phantoms is a guarantee of protection. There is always the mystic water between the realm of the living and the realm of subjectivity.<sup>279</sup> In ancient Egypt there was always the last voyage begun on the sacred Nile; and in all classical literature Pluto's realm is entered by crossing a dark, deep river—the river of forgetfulness between physical consciousness and spiritual consciousness. Burns has expressed this belief in its popular form in his *Tam O'Shanter*. And in our Arthurian parallel there is a clear enough relation between the beings inhabiting the invisible realm and the Brythonic heroes and gods. How striking, too, as Gaston Paris has pointed out, is the similarity between Melwas' capturing Gwenhwyvar as she was in the woods a-maying, and the rape of Proserpine by Pluto, the god of Hades, while she was collecting flowers in the fields.<sup>280</sup>

A curious matter in connexion with this episode of Gwenhwyvar's abduction should claim our attention. Malory relates<sup>281</sup> that when Queen Guenever advised her knights of the Table Round that on the morrow (May Day, when fairies have special powers) she would go on maying, she warned them all to be well-horsed and *dressed in green*. This was the colour that nearly all the fairy-folk of Britain and Ireland wear. It symbolizes, as many ancient mystical writings declare, eternal youth, and resurrection or re-birth, as in nature during the springtime, when all vegetation after its death-sleep of winter springs into new life.<sup>282</sup> In the *Myvyrian Archaiology*,<sup>283</sup> Arthur when he has reached the realm of Melwas speaks with Gwenhwyvar,<sup>284</sup> he being on a black horse and she on a green one:—'Green is my steed of the tint of the leaves.' Arthur's black horse—black perhaps signifying the dead to whose realm he has gone—being proof against all water, may have been, therefore, proof against the inhabitants of the world of shades and against fairies:—

Black is my steed and brave beneath me,  
No water will make him fear,  
And no man will make him swerve.

The fairy colour, in different works and among different authors differing both in time and country, continues to attach itself to the abduction episode. Thus, in the fourteenth century the poet D. ab Gwilym alludes to Melwas himself as having a cloak of green:—‘The sleep of Melwas beneath (or in) the green cloak.’ Sir John Rhÿs, who makes this translation, observes that another reading still of *y glas glog* resolves it into a green bower to which Melwas took Gwenhwyvar.<sup>285</sup> In any case, the reference is significant, and goes far, in combination with the other references, to represent the White Phantom or Fairy and her lover Melwas as beings of a race like the Irish *Sidhe* or People of the Goddess Dana. And though by no means exhausting all examples tending to prove this point, we pass on to the seventh and most important of our links in the sequence of evidence, the carrying of Arthur to Avalon in a fairy ship by fairy women.

From the first, Arthur was under superhuman guidance and protection. Merlin the magician, born of a spirit or daemon, claimed Arthur before birth and became his teacher afterwards. From the mysterious Lady of the Lake, Arthur received his magic sword *Excalibur*,<sup>286</sup> and to her returned it, through Sir Bedivere. During all his time on earth the ‘lady of the lake that was always friendly to King Arthur’<sup>287</sup> watched over him; and once when she saw him in great danger, like the Irish *Morrighu* who presided over the career of Cuchulainn, she sought to save him, and with the help of Sir Tristram succeeded.<sup>287</sup> The passing of Arthur to Avalon or Faerie seems to be a return to his own native realm of subjectivity. His own sister was with him in the ship, for she was of the invisible country too.<sup>288</sup> And another of his companions on his voyage from the visible to the invisible was his life-guardian Nimue, the lady of the lake. Merlin could not be of the company, for he was already in Faerie with the Fay Vivian. Behold the passing of Arthur as Malory describes it:—‘... thus was he led away in a ship wherein were three queens; that one was King Arthur’s sister, Queen Morgan le Fay;

the other was the Queen of Northgalis; the third was the Queen of the Waste Lands. Also there was Nimue, the chief lady of the lake, that had wedded Pelleas the good knight; and this lady had done much for King Arthur, for she would never suffer Sir Pelleas to be in no place where he should be in danger of his life.<sup>289</sup> Concerning the great Arthur's return from Avalon we shall speak in the chapter dealing with Re-birth. And we pass now from Arthur and his Brotherhood of gods and fairy-folk to Lancelot and his son Galahad—the two chief knights in the Arthurian Romance.

According to one of the earliest accounts we have of Lancelot, the German poem by Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, as analysed by Gaston Paris, he was the son of King Pant and Queen Clarine of Genewis.<sup>290</sup> In consequence of the hatred of their subjects the royal pair were forced to flee when Lancelot was only a year old. During the flight, the king, mortally wounded, died; and just as the queen was about to be taken captive, a fairy rising in a cloud of mist carried away the infant Lancelot from where his parents had placed him under a tree. The fairy took him to her abode on an island in the midst of the sea, from whence she derived her title of Lady of the Lake, and he, as her adopted son, the name of *Lancelot du Lac*; and her island-world was called the Land of Maidens. Having lived in that world of Faerie so long, it was only natural that Lancelot should have grown up more like one of its fair-folk than like a mortal. No doubt it was on account of his half-supernatural nature that he fell in love with the White Phantom, Gwenhwyvar, the wife of the king who had power to enter Hades and return again to the land of the living. Who better than Lancelot could have rescued Arthur's queen? No one else in the court was so well fitted for the task. And it was he who was able to cross one of the magic bridges into the realm of Melwas, the Otherworld, while Gauvain (in the English form, Gawayne) failed.

Malory's narrative records how Lancelot, while suffering from the malady of madness caused by Gwenhwyvar's jealous expulsion of Elayne his fairy-sweetheart—quite a parallel case to that of Cuchulainn when his wife Emer expelled his fairy-mistress Fand—fought against a wild boar and was terribly wounded, and how afterwards he was nursed by his own

Elayne in Fairyland, and healed and restored to his right mind by the Sangreal. Then Sir Ector and Sir Perceval found him there in the Joyous Isle enjoying the companionship of Elayne, where he had been many years, and from that world of Faerie induced him to return to Arthur's court. And, finally, comes the most important element of all to show how closely related Lancelot is with the fairy world and its people, and how inseparable from that invisible realm another of the fundamental elements in the life of Arthur is—the Quest of the Holy Grail, and the story of Galahad, who of all the knights was pure and good enough to behold the Sacred Vessel, and who was the offspring of the foster-son of the Lady of the Lake and the fairy woman Elayne.<sup>291</sup>

In the strange old Welsh tale of *Kulhwch and Olwen* we find Arthur and his knights even more closely identified with the fairy realm than in Malory and the Norman-French writers; and this is important, because the ancient tale is, as scholars think, probably much freer from foreign influences and re-working than the better-known romances of Arthur, and therefore more in accord with genuine Celtic beliefs and folk-lore, as we shall quickly see. The court of King Arthur to which the youth Kulhwch goes seeking aid in his enterprise seems in some ways—though the parallel is not complete enough to be emphasized—to be a more artistic, because literary, picture of that fairy court which the Celtic peasant locates under mountains, in caverns, in hills, and in knolls, a court quite comparable to that of the Irish *Sidhe*-folk or Tuatha De Danann. Arthur is represented in the midst of a brilliant life where, as in the fairy palaces, there is much feasting; and Kulhwch being invited to the feasting says, 'I came not here to consume meat and drink.'

And behold what sort of personages from that court Kulhwch has pledged to him, so that by their supernatural assistance he may obtain Olwen, herself perhaps a fairy held under fairy enchantment<sup>292</sup>: the sons of Gwawrddur Kyrvach, whom Arthur had power to call from the confines of hell; Morvran the son of Tegid, who, because of his ugliness, was thought to be a demon; Sandde Bryd Angel, who was so beautiful that mortals thought him a ministering angel; Henbedestyr, with whom no one could



keep pace ‘either on horseback, or on foot’, and who therefore seems to be a spirit of the air; Henwas Adeinawg, with whom ‘no four-footed beast could run the distance of an acre, much less go beyond it’; Sgilti Yscawndroed, who must have been another spirit or fairy, for ‘when he intended to go on a message for his Lord (Arthur, who is like a Tuatha De Danann king), he never sought to find a path, but knowing whither he was to go, if his way lay through a wood he went along the tops of the trees’, and ‘during his whole life, a blade of reed-grass bent not beneath his feet, much less did one ever break, so lightly did he tread’; Gwallgoyc, who ‘when he came to a town, though there were three hundred houses in it, if he wanted anything, he would not let sleep come to the eyes of any whilst he remained there’; Osla Gyllellvawr, who bore a short broad dagger, and ‘when Arthur and his hosts came before a torrent, they would seek for a narrow place where they might pass the water, and would lay the sheathed dagger across the torrent, and it would form a bridge sufficient for the armies of the three Islands of Britain, and of the three islands adjacent, with their spoil.’ It seems very evident that this is the magic bridge, so often typified by a sword or dagger, which connects the world invisible with our own, and over which all shades and spirits pass freely to and fro. In this case we think Arthur is very clearly a ruler of the spirit realm, for, like the great Tuatha De Danann king Dagda, he can command its fairy-like inhabitants, and his army is an army of spirits or fairies. The unknown author of *Kulhwch*, like Spenser in modern times in his *Faerie Queene*, seems to have made the Island of Britain the realm of Faerie—the Celtic Otherworld—and Arthur its king. But let us take a look at more of the men pledged to Kulhwch from among Arthur’s followers: Clust the son of Clustveinad, who possessed clairaudient faculties of so extraordinary a kind that ‘though he were buried seven cubits beneath the earth, he would hear the ant fifty miles off rise from her nest in the morning’; and the wonderful Kai, who could live nine days and nine nights under water, for his breath lasted this long, and he could exist the same length of time without sleep. ‘A wound from Kai’s sword no physician could heal.’ And at will he was as tall as the highest tree in the forest. ‘And he had another peculiarity: so

great was the heat of his nature, that, when it rained hardest, whatever he carried remained dry for a handbreadth above and a handbreadth below his hand; and when his companions were coldest, it was to them as fuel with which to light their fire.'

Yet besides all these strange knights, Arthur commanded a being who is without any reasonable doubt a god or ruler of the subjective realm—'Gwynn ab Nudd, whom God has placed over the brood of devils in Annwn, lest they should destroy the present race. He will never be spared thence.' Whatever each one of us may think of this wonderful assembly of warriors and heroes who recognized in Arthur their chief, they are certainly not beings of the ordinary type—in fact they seem not of this world, but of that hidden land to which we all shall one day journey.<sup>293</sup> But to avoid too much conjecture and to speak with a degree of scientific exactness as to how Arthur and these companions of his are to be considered, let us undertake a brief investigation into the mythological character and nature of the chief one of them next to the great hero—Gwynn ab Nudd. Professor J. Loth has said that 'nothing shows better the evolution of mythological personages than the history of Gwynn',<sup>294</sup> and in Irish we have the equivalent form of Nudd in the name Nuada—famous for having had a hand of silver; and Nuada of the Silver Hand was a king of the Tuatha De Danann. The same authority thus describes Gwynn, the son of Nudd:—'Gwynn, like his father Nudd, is an ancient god of the Britons and of the Gaels. Christian priests have made of him a demon. The people persisted in regarding him as a powerful and rich king, the sovereign of supernatural beings.'<sup>295</sup> And referring to Gwynn, Professor Loth in his early edition of *Kulhwch* says:—'Our author has had an original idea: he has left him in hell, to which place Christianity had made him descend, but for a motive which does him the greatest honour: God has given him the strength of demons to control them and to prevent them from destroying the present race of men: he is indispensable down there.'<sup>295</sup> Lady Guest calls Gwynn the King of Faerie,<sup>296</sup> the ruler of the *Tylwyth Teg* or 'Family of Beauty', who are always joyful and well-disposed toward mortals; and also the ruler of the Elves (Welsh *Ellyllon*), a goblin race who take special delight in

misleading travellers and in playing mischievous tricks on men. It is even said that Gwynn himself is given to indulging in the same mischievous amusements as his elvish subjects.

The evidence now set forth seems to suggest clearly and even definitely that Arthur in his true nature is a god of the subjective world, a ruler of ghosts, demons, and demon rulers, and fairies; that the people of his court are more like the Irish *Sidhe*-folk than like mortals; and that as a great king he is comparable to Dagda the over-king of all the Tuatha De Danann. Arthur and Osiris, two culture heroes and sun-gods, as we suggested at first, are strikingly parallel. Osiris came from the Otherworld to this one, became the first Divine Ruler and Culture Hero of Egypt, and then returned to the Otherworld, where he is now a king. Arthur's father was a ruler in the Otherworld, and Arthur evidently came from there to be the Supreme Champion of the Brythons, and then returned to that realm whence he took his origin, a realm which poets called Avalon. The passing of Arthur seems mystically to represent the sunset over the Western Ocean: Arthur disappears beneath the horizon into the Lower World which is also the Halls of Osiris, wherein Osiris journeys between sunset and sunrise, between death and re-birth. Merlin found the infant Arthur floating on the waves: the sun rising across the waters is this birth of Arthur, the birth of Osiris. In the chapter on Re-birth, evidence will be offered to show that as a culture hero Arthur is to be regarded as a sun-god incarnate in a human body to teach the Brythons arts and sciences and hidden things—even as Prometheus and Zeus are said to have come to earth to teach the Greeks; and that as a sixth-century warrior, Arthur, in accordance with the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth, is an ancient Brythonic hero reincarnate.

## **The Literary Evolution and the Antiquity of the Brythonic Fairy-Romances**

After the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, the ancient fairy-romances of the Brythons began to exercise their remarkable literary

influence as we see it now in the evolution of the Arthurian Legend. And in this evolution of the Arthurian Legend we find the proof of the antiquity of the Brythonic Fairy-Faith, just as we find in the old Irish manuscripts the proof of the antiquity of the Gaelic Fairy-Faith.

Long before 1066, Gildas gives the first recorded germs of the Arthurian story in his *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, though they are hardly distinguishable as such. His failure to mention the name of Arthur, though treating of the whole period when Arthur is supposed to have lived, he himself being contemporary with the period, raises the very difficult question which we have already mentioned, Did the mighty Brythonic hero ever have an actual historical existence? Almost three hundred years later—a period sufficiently removed from Gildas to have made Arthur the supreme champion of the falling Brythons, granting that he did exist during the sixth century as a Brythonic chieftain—in the *Historia Britonum*, completed about the year 800, and attributed to Nennius, Arthur, for the first time in a known manuscript, is mentioned as a character of British history.<sup>297</sup> All that can be definitely said of the narrative of Nennius ‘is that it represents more or less inconsistent British traditions of uncertain age’.<sup>297</sup> That it is not always historical, many scholars are agreed. Dr. R. H. Fletcher says, ‘There is always the possibility that Arthur never existed at all, and that even Nennius’s comparatively modest eulogy has no firmer foundation than the persistent stories of ancient Celtic myth or the patriotic figments of the ardent Celtic imagination.’<sup>298</sup> Sir John Rhys also propounds a similar view.<sup>299</sup> Thus, for example, Nennius states that Arthur in one battle slew single handed more than nine hundred men; and, again, that the number of Arthur’s always-successful battles was twelve, as though Arthur were the sun or a sun-god, and his battles the twelve months of the solar year.<sup>298</sup>

Between Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth there is an intermediate stage in the development of the Arthurian Legend, during which the character of Arthur tends to become more romantic; but for our purpose this period is of slight importance. Thereafter, by means of Geoffrey’s famous *Historia Regum Britanniae*, written about 1136, the Arthurian Legend gained popularity throughout Western Europe. In this work Arthur ceases to

be purely historical, and appears as a great king enveloped in the mythical atmosphere of a Celtic hero, and with him Merlin and Lear are for the first time definitely enshrined in the literature of Britain.<sup>300</sup> Arthur's career is completely sketched in the *Historia*, from birth to his mysterious departure for the Isle of Avalon after the last fight with Modred, when fairy women take him to cure him of his wounds (Book XI, 1–2). Geoffrey, thus the father of the Arthurian Legend in English and European literature, was undoubtedly a Welshman who probably had natural opportunities of knowing the true character of Arthur from genuine Brythonic sources, though we know little about his life. His *Historia*, as the researches of scholars have shown, was the sum total in his time of all Arthurian history and myth, whether written or orally transmitted, which he could collect; just as Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* was a compendium of Arthurian material in the time of Edward IV.

There followed many imitations and translations of the *Historia*. The most important of these appeared in 1155, *Le Roman de Brut* or 'The Story of Brutus', by the Norman poet Wace. The *Brut*, though fundamentally a rimed version of the *Historia*, is much more than a mere translation: Wace has improved on it; and he gives a convincing impression that he had access to Celtic Arthurian stories not drawn upon by Geoffrey, for he gives new touches about Gawain, mentions the Britons' expectation of Arthur's return from Faerie, and the institution of the Round Table.<sup>301</sup>

Somewhere about the year 1200, Layamon, a simple-hearted Saxon priest, wrote another *Brut*, based upon the metrical one by Wace; and in the literature of England, Layamon's work is the most valuable single production between the Conquest and Chaucer. The life of Layamon is very obscure, but it seems reasonably certain that for a long time he lived on the Welsh marches in North Worcestershire, in the midst of living Brythonic traditions, which he used at first hand; and, as a result, we find in his *Brut* legends not recorded in Geoffrey, or Wace, or in any earlier or contemporary literature. For our purposes the most interesting of many interesting additions made by Layamon are the curious passages about the fairy elves at Arthur's birth, and about the way in which Arthur was taken

by them to their queen Argante in Avalon to be cured of his wounds:—‘The time came that was chosen, then was Arthur born. So soon as he came on earth elves took him; they enchanted the child into magic most strong; they gave him might to be the best of all knights; they gave him another thing, that he should be a rich king; they gave him the third, that he should live long; they gave to him the prince virtues most good, so that he was most generous of all men alive. This the elves gave him, and thus the child thrived.’<sup>302</sup>

In the last fatal battle Modred is slain and Arthur is grievously wounded. As Arthur lies wounded, Constantine, Cador’s son, the earl of Cornwall, and a relative of Arthur, comes to him. Arthur greets him with these words:—“Constantine, thou art welcome; thou wert Cador’s son. I give thee here my kingdom.... And I will fare to Avalun, to the fairest of all maidens, to Argante the queen, and elf most fair, and she shall make my wounds all sound; make me all whole with healing draughts. And afterwards I will come [again] to my kingdom, and dwell with the Britons with mickle joy.” Even with the words, there approached from the sea that was, a short boat, floating with the waves; and two women therein, wondrously formed; and they took Arthur anon, and bare him quickly, and laid him softly down, and forth gan depart. Then it was accomplished that Merlin whilom said, that mickle care (sorrow) should be of Arthur’s departure. The Britons believe that he is alive, and dwelleth in Avalun with the fairest of all elves; and the Britons even yet expect when Arthur shall return.’<sup>303</sup>

During this same period, Giraldus Cambrensis (1147–1223) in his *Itinerarium Cambriae* (Book I, c. 8) collected a popular Otherworld tale. It is about a priest named Elidorus, who when a boy in Gower, the western district of Glamorganshire, had free passage between this world of ours and an underground country inhabited by a race of little people who spoke a language like Greek. This tends to prove that the Fairy-Faith was then flourishing among the people of Wales.

It was chiefly during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the Arthurian Legend as a thing of literature began to take definite shape. The

old romances of the Brythons were cultivated and revised, and written down by men and women of literary genius. Chrétien de Troyes, who recorded a large number of legendary stories in verse, Marie de France, famous for her *Lais*, Thomas, the author of the chief version of the *Tristan* legend,<sup>304</sup> Béroul, who recorded a less important version of this legend,<sup>305</sup> and Robert de Boron, who did much to develop the legend of the Holy Grail, were among the greatest workers in the French Celtic Revival of this time.

Professor Brown has shown that ‘almost every incident in Chrétien’s *Iwain* was suggested by an ancient Celtic tale, dealing with the familiar theme of a journey to win a fairy mistress in the Otherworld.’<sup>306</sup> The fay whom Iwain marries is called Laudine; and, like one of the fairies who live in sacred waters, she has her favourite fountain which the knight guards, as though he were the Black Knight in the old Welsh tale of *The Lady of the Fountain*. Both Gaston Paris and Alfred Nutt have also recognized the tale of *Iwain* as a fairy romance.<sup>307</sup> Professor Loth observes that, ‘It is not impossible that Chrétien had known, among fairy legends, Armorican legends, concerning the fairies of waters, whose rôle is identical with that of the Welsh *Tylwyth Teg*.’<sup>308</sup>

In *Lanval*, one of the *Lais*<sup>309</sup> by Marie de France, written during the twelfth century, probably while its author was living in England, we have direct proof that there was then flourishing in Brittany—well known to Marie de France, who was French by birth and training—a popular belief in fairy women who lived in the Otherworld, and who could *take* mortals on whom their love fell. It is probable that the older lay, to which Marie de France refers in the beginning of her *Lanval*, may have been the anonymous one of *Graelent*, sometimes improperly attributed to her. Zimmer and Foerster place the origin of *Graelent* in Brittany<sup>310</sup>; and the similarity of the heroes in the two poems seems to be due to a very ancient Brythonic Fairy-Faith. Dr. Schofield sees in *Graelent* an older form of the more polished *Lanval*; and remarks that the chief difference in the two *lais* is found in the way the hero meets the fairy women. In the case of *Lanval*, when he leaves the court, he goes to rest beside a river where two beautiful maidens come

to him; Graellent is alone in the woods when he sees a hind whiter than snow, and following it comes to a place where fairy damsels are bathing in a fountain. There seems to be no doubt that in both poems the maidens and damsels are fairies quite like the Tuatha De Danann, with power to cast their spell over beautiful young men whom they wish to have for husbands. In *Guingemor*, another of the old Breton lays, ascribed by Gaston Paris to Marie de France, we find again fairy-romance episodes similar to those in *Lanval* and *Graelent*.<sup>311</sup> The *Lais* of Marie de France had many imitators in England. Chaucer, too, has made it clear that he knew a good deal about the old Breton *lais* and their subjects or ‘matter’, for in the *Prologue to the Frankeleyn’s Tale* he writes:—

Thise olde gentil Britons in hir dayes  
Of diverse aventures maden layes,  
Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge.

We may now briefly examine, in a general way, some of the most noteworthy of the more obscure, but for us important Old French fairy-romances of a kindred Brythonic or Arthurian character, called *Romans d’Aventure* and *Romans Bretons*, wherein *fées* appear or are mentioned: i.e. *Le Bel Inconnu*, *Blancadin*, *Brun de la Montaigne*, *Claris et Laris*, *Dolopathos*, *Escanor*, *Floriant et Florete*, *Partonopeus*, *La Vengeance Raguidel*, *Joufrois*, and *Amada et Ydoine*.<sup>312</sup> In these romances, fairies commonly appear as most beautiful supernormal women who love mortal heroes. They are seen chiefly at night, frequenting forests and fountains, and like all fairies disappear at or before cock-crow. They are skilled in magic and astrology; like the Greek Fates, some of them spin and weave and have great influence over the lives of mankind. They are represented as relatively immortal, so long is their span of life compared to ours; but, ultimately, they seem to be subject to a change such as we call death. This indeed is never specifically mentioned, only implied by the statements that they enjoy childhood and then womanhood, being thus created and not eternal beings. Some are very prominent figures, like *Morgain la Fée*,



Arthur's sister. In most cases they are beneficent, and frequently act as guardian spirits for their special hero, just as the Lake Lady for Arthur and the *Morrighu* for Cuchulainn. So strong is the faith in these *fées* that a man meeting unusual success is often described as *féed*—that is endowed with fairy power or under fairy protection, as Perceval's adversary, the Knight of the Dragon, states.<sup>313</sup> In *Joufrois*, too, the power of the fairies, or else the special protection of God, is considered the cause of success in arms.<sup>314</sup> In *Brun de la Montaigne*, *Morgain la Fée* is represented as the cousin of Arthur; and Butor, the father of Brun, mentions several localities in different lands, which, like the Forest of Brocéliande in Brittany, the chief theatre of this romance, are fairy haunts; and he names them as being under the dominion of Arthur, who is described as a great fairy king.<sup>315</sup>

Such fairy romances as the above (and they are but a few examples selected from among a vast number) often localized in Brittany, raise the perplexing and far-reaching problem concerning the origin of the 'Matter of Britain'. The most reasonable position to take with respect to this problem would seem to be that Celtic traditions flourished wherever there were Gaels and Brythons, that there was much interchange of these traditions between one Celtic country and another—especially between Wales and Ireland and across the channel between Brittany and South England, including Cornwall and Wales, both before and after the Christian era. Further, the Arthurian fairy-romances, based upon such interchanged Celtic traditions, grew up with a Brythonic background, chiefly after the Norman Conquest, both in Armorica and in Britain, and became in the later Middle Ages one of the chief glories of English and of European literature.

In concluding this slight examination of Brythonic fairy-romances, we may very briefly suggest by means of a few selected examples what fairies are like in the *Mabinogion* stories and in the *Four Ancient Books of Wales*. *Kulhwch and Olwen*, the chief literary treasure-house of ancient magical and mystical Otherworld and fairy traditions of the Brythons, which we have already considered in relation to Arthur, 'appears to be built upon Arthurian and other legends of native growth.'<sup>316</sup> Unmistakable Welsh parallels to the Irish fairy-belief appear in the *Mabinogi of Pwyll, Prince of*

*Dyfed*, where the two chief incidents are Pwyll's journey to the Otherworld after he and Arawn its ruler have exchanged shapes and kingdoms for a year, and the marriage of Pwyll to a fairy damsel; in the *Mabinogi* of *Manawyddan*, which contains much magic and shape-shifting, and the description of a fairy castle belonging to Llwyd; and in the *Mabinogi* of *Branwen, the Daughter of Llyr*, where there is the episode of the seven-year feast at Harlech over the Head of Bran, during which the Birds of Rhiannon's realm sing so sweetly that time passes abnormally fast. The subject-matter of the four true *Mabinogion* (composed before the eleventh century) is, as Sir John Rhys has pointed out, the fortunes of three clans of superhuman beings comparable to the Irish Tuatha De Danann: (1) the Children of Llyr, (2) the Children of Don, (3) and the Family of Pwyll.<sup>317</sup> Herein, then, the ancient Gaelic and Brythonic Fairy-Faiths coincide, and show the unity of the Celtic race which evolved them.

In the *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, which are poetical compositions, whereas the *Mabinogion* tales are prose with extremely little verse, there are certain interesting passages to illustrate the ancient Fairy-Faith of the Brythons from some of its purest sources. The first selected example comes from the *Black Book of Caermarthen*. It is a poem, sometimes called the *Avallenau*, from among the poems relating to the Battle of Arderdydd; and it represents *Myrddin* or Merlin, the famous magician of Arthur, quite at the mercy of sprites. The passage is an interesting one as showing that in the region where Merlin is supposed to be under the enchantment of the fairy woman Vivian he was regarded as no longer able to exercise his wonted control over spirits like fairies. As in ancient non-Celtic belief, where the loss of chastity in a magician, that is to say in one able to command certain orders of invisible beings, always leads to his falling under their lawless power, so was it with Merlin when overcome by Vivian. And this is Merlin's lamentation:—

Ten years and forty, as the toy of lawless ones,  
Have I been wandering in gloom among sprites.  
After wealth in abundance and entertaining minstrels,

I have been [here so long that] it is useless for gloom and sprites to lead me astray.<sup>318</sup>

In a dialogue between Myrddin and his sister Gwenddydd, contained in the *Red Book of Hergest I*,<sup>319</sup> there is a curious reference to ghosts of the mountain who, just like fairies that live in the mountains, steal away men's reason when they *strike* them—in death which may appear natural, in sickness, or in accident. And after his death—after he has been *taken* by these ghosts of the mountain—Myrddin returns as a ghost and speaks from the grave a prophecy which 'the ghost of the mountain in Aber Carav'<sup>320</sup> told him. Not only do these passages prove the Celtic belief in ghosts like fairies to have existed anciently in Wales; but they show also that the recorded Fairy-Faith of the Brythons, like that of the Gaels of Ireland and Scotland, directly attests and confirms our Psychological Theory. Like a record from the official proceedings of the Psychical Research Society itself, they form one of the strongest proofs that fairies, ghosts, and shades were confused, all alike, in the mind of the Welsh poet, mingling together in that realm where mortals see with a new vision, and exist with a body invisible to us.

Our study of the literary evolution of the Brythonic fairy-romances shows that as early as about the year 800 Arthurian traditions were known, though possibly Arthur himself never had historical existence. By about 1136, when Geoffrey's famous *Historia* appeared, these traditions were already highly developed in Britain, and Arthur had become a great Brythonic hero enveloped in a halo of romance and myth, and, as an Otherworld being, was definitely related to Avalon and its fairy inhabitants. This new literary material of Celtic origin opened up to Europe by Geoffrey rapidly began to influence profoundly the form of continental as well as English poetry and prose, chiefly through the writers of the Norman-French period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In itself it was in no wise essentially different from what we find as fairy romances in the old Irish manuscripts written during the same and earlier periods. Welsh literature, however it may be related to Irish, shows a common origin with it. The four

true *Mabinogion* as stories are earlier than 1100; *Kulhwch and Olwen* in its present form most probably dates from the latter half of the twelfth century; the *Four Ancient Books of Wales* date from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries as manuscripts. In both ancient and modern times there was much interchange of material between Irish Gaels and Brythons; and Brittany as well as Britain and Ireland undoubtedly contributed to the evolution of the complex fairy romances which formed the germ of the Arthurian Legend.

When we stop to consider how long it may have taken the Brythonic Fairy-Faith, as well as that of the Gaels, to become so widespread and popular among the Celtic peoples that it could take such definite shape as it now shows in all the oldest manuscripts in different languages, we can easily wander backward into periods of enlightenment and civilization beyond the horizon of our little fragments of recorded history. Who can tell how many ages ago the Fairy-Faith began its first evolution, or who can say that there was ever a Celt who did not believe in, or know about fairies?

## Chapter VI

### The Celtic Otherworld<sup>321</sup>

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‘In Ireland this world and the world we go to after death are not far apart.’—W. B. Yeats.

‘Many go to the Tir-na-nog in sleep, and some are said to have remained there, and only a vacant form is left behind without the light in the eyes which marks the presence of a soul.’—A. E.

General ideas of the Otherworld: its location; its subjectivity; its names; its extent; Tethra one of its kings—The Silver Branch and the Golden Bough; and Initiations—The Otherworld the Heaven-

World of all religions—Voyage of Bran—Cormac in the Land of Promise—Magic Wands—Cuchulainn's Sick-Bed—Ossian's return from Fairyland—Lanval's going to Avalon—Voyage of Mael-Duin—Voyage of Teigue—Adventures of Art—Cuchulainn's and Arthur's Otherworld Quests—Literary Evolution of idea of Happy Otherworld.

## General Description

The Heaven-World of the ancient Celts, unlike that of the Christians, was not situated in some distant, unknown region of planetary space, but here on our own earth. As it was necessarily a subjective world, poets could only describe it in terms more or less vague; and its exact geographical location, accordingly, differed widely in the minds of scribes from century to century. Sometimes, as is usual to-day in fairy-lore, it was a subterranean world entered through caverns, or hills, or mountains, and inhabited by many races and orders of invisible beings, such as demons, shades, fairies, or even gods. And the underground world of the *Sidhe*-folk, which cannot be separated from it, was divided into districts or kingdoms under different fairy kings and queens, just as the upper world of mortals. We already know how the Tuatha De Danann or *Sidhe*-folk, after their defeat by the Sons of Mil at the Battle of Tailte, retired to this underground world and took possession of its palaces beneath the green hills and vales of Ireland; and how from there, as gods of the harvest, they still continued to exercise authority over their conquerors, or marshalled their own invisible spirit-hoards in fairy warfare, and sometimes interfered in the wars of men.

More frequently, in the old Irish manuscripts, the Celtic Otherworld was located in the midst of the Western Ocean, as though it were the 'double' of the lost Atlantis;<sup>322</sup> and Manannan Mac Lir, the Son of the Sea—perhaps himself the 'double' of an ancient Atlantean king—was one of the divine rulers of its fairy inhabitants, and his palace, for he was one of the Tuatha

De Danann, was there rather than in Ireland; and when he travelled between the two countries it was in a magic chariot drawn by horses who moved over the sea-waves as on land. And fairy women came from that mid-Atlantic world in magic boats like spirit boats, to charm away such mortal men as in their love they chose, or else to take great Arthur wounded unto death. And in that island world there was neither death nor pain nor scandal, nought save immortal and unfading youth, and endless joy and feasting.

Even yet at rare intervals, like a phantom, Hy Brasil appears far out on the Atlantic. No later than the summer of 1908 it is said to have been seen from West Ireland, just as that strange invisible island near Innishmurray, inhabited by the invisible ‘gentry’, is seen—once in seven years. And too many men of intelligence testify to having seen Hy Brasil at the same moment, when they have been together, or separated, as during the summer of 1908, for it to be explained away as an ordinary illusion of the senses. Nor can it be due to a mirage such as we know, because neither its shape nor position seems to conform to any known island or land mass. The Celtic Otherworld is like that hidden realm of subjectivity lying just beyond the horizon of mortal existence, which we cannot behold when we would, save with the mystic vision of the Irish seer. Thus in the legend of Bran’s friends, who sat over dinner at Harlech with the Head of Bran for seven years, three curious birds acted as musicians, the Three Birds of Rhiannon, which were said to sing the dead back to life and the living into death;—but the birds were not in Harlech, they were out over the sea in the atmosphere of Rhiannon’s realm in the bosom of Cardigan Bay.<sup>323</sup> And though we might say of that Otherworld, as we learn from these Three Birds of Rhiannon, and as Socrates would say, that its inhabitants are come from the living and the living in our world from the dead there, yet, as has already been set forth in chapter iv, we ought not to think of the *Sidhe*-folk, nor of such great heroes and gods as Arthur and Cuchulainn and Finn, who are also of its invisible company, as in any sense half-conscious shades; for they are always represented as being in the full enjoyment of an existence and consciousness greater than our own.

In Irish manuscripts, the Otherworld beyond the Ocean bears many names. It is *Tír-na-nog*, ‘The Land of Youth’; *Tír-Innambéo*, ‘The Land of the Living’; *Tír Tairngire*, ‘The Land of Promise’; *Tír N-aill*, ‘The Other Land (or World)’; *Mag Már*, ‘The Great Plain’; and also *Mag Mell*, ‘The Plain Agreeable (or Happy).’

But this western Otherworld, if it is what we believe it to be—a poetical picture of the great subjective world—cannot be the realm of any one race of invisible beings to the exclusion of another. In it all alike—gods, Tuatha De Danann, fairies, demons, shades, and every sort of disembodied spirits—find their appropriate abode; for though it seems to surround and interpenetrate this planet even as the X-rays interpenetrate matter, it can have no other limits than those of the Universe itself. And that it is not an exclusive realm is certain from what our old Irish manuscripts record concerning the Fomorian races.<sup>324</sup> These, when they met defeat on the battle-field of Moytura at the hands of the Tuatha De Danann, retired altogether from Ireland, their overthrow being final, and returned to their own invisible country—a mysterious land beyond the Ocean, where the dead find a new existence, and where their god-king Tethra ruled, as he formerly ruled in this world. And the fairy women of Tethra’s kingdom, even like those who came from the Tuatha De Danann of Erin, or those of Manannan’s ocean-world, enticed mortals to go with them to be heroes under their king, and to behold there the assemblies of ancestors. It was one of them who came to Connla, son of Conn, supreme king of Ireland; and this was her message to him:—‘The immortals invite you. You are going to be one of the heroes of the people of Tethra. You will always be seen there, in the assemblies of your ancestors, in the midst of those who know and love you.’ And with the fairy spell upon him the young prince entered the glass boat of the fairy woman, and his father the king, in great tribulation and wonder, beheld them disappear across the waters never to return.<sup>324</sup>

### **The Silver Branch<sup>325</sup> and the Golden Bough**

To enter the Otherworld before the appointed hour marked by death, a passport was often necessary, and this was usually a silver branch of the sacred apple-tree bearing blossoms, or fruit, which the queen of the Land of the Ever-Living and Ever-Young gives to those mortals whom she wishes for as companions; though sometimes, as we shall see, it was a single apple without its branch. The queen's gifts serve not only as passports, but also as food and drink for mortals who go with her. Often the apple-branch produces music so soothing that mortals who hear it forget all troubles and even cease to grieve for those whom the fairy women *take*. For us there are no episodes more important than those in the ancient epics concerning these apple-tree talismans, because in them we find a certain key which unlocks the secret of that world from which such talismans are brought, and proves it to be the same sort of a place as the Otherworld of the Greeks and Romans. Let us then use the key and make a few comparisons between the Silver Branch of the Celts and the Golden Bough of the Ancients, expecting the two symbols naturally to differ in their functions, though not fundamentally.

It is evident at the outset that the Golden Bough was as much the property of the queen of that underworld called Hades as the Silver Branch was the gift of the Celtic fairy queen, and like the Silver Bough it seems to have been the symbolic bond between that world and this, offered as a tribute to Proserpine by all initiates, who made the mystic voyage in full human consciousness. And, as we suspect, there may be even in the ancient Celtic legends of mortals who make that strange voyage to the Western Otherworld and return to this world again, an echo of initiatory rites—perhaps druidic—similar to those of Proserpine as shown in the journey of Aeneas, which, as Virgil records it, is undoubtedly a poetical rendering of an actual psychic experience of a great initiate.

In Virgil's classic poem the Sibyl commanded the plucking of the sacred bough to be carried by Aeneas when he entered the underworld; for without such a bough plucked near the entrance to Avernus from the wondrous tree sacred to Infernal Juno (i.e. Proserpine) none could enter Pluto's realm.<sup>326</sup> And when Charon refused to ferry Aeneas across the Stygian lake until the



Sibyl-woman drew forth the Golden Bough from her bosom, where she had hidden it, it becomes clearly enough a passport to Hades, just as the Silver Branch borne by the fairy woman is a passport to *Tír N-aill*; and the Sibyl-woman who guided Aeneas to the Greek and Roman Otherworld takes the place of the fairy woman who leads mortals like Bran to the Celtic Otherworld.<sup>327</sup>

### **The Otherworld Idea Literally Interpreted**

With this parallel between the Otherworld of the Celts and that of the Ancients seemingly established, we may leave poetical images and seek a literal interpretation for the animistic idea about those realms. The Rites of Proserpine as conducted in the Mysteries of Antiquity furnish us with the means; and in what Servius has written we have the material ready.<sup>328</sup> Taking the letter Y, which Pythagoras said is like life with its dividing ways of good and evil, as the mystic symbol of the branch which all initiates like Aeneas offered to Proserpine in the subjective world while there out of the physical body, he says of the initiatory rites:—‘He (the poet) could not join the Rites of Proserpine without having the branch to hold up. And by “*going to the shades*” he (the poet) *means celebrating the Rites of Proserpine*.’<sup>328</sup> This passage is certainly capable of but one meaning; and we may perhaps assume that the invisible realm of the Ancients, which is called Hades, is like the Celtic Otherworld located in the Western Ocean, and is also like, or has its mythological counterpart in, the Elysian Fields to the West, reserved by the Greeks and Romans for their gods and heroes, and in the Happy Otherworld of Scandinavian, Iranian, and Indian mythologies. It must then follow that all these realms—though placed in different localities by various nations, epochs, traditions, scribes, and poets (even as the under-ground world of the Tuatha De Danann in Ireland differs from that ruled over by one of their own race, Manannan the Son of the Sea)—are simply various ways which different Aryan peoples have had of looking at that one great invisible realm of which we have just spoken, and which

forms the Heavenworld of every religion, Aryan and non-Aryan, known to man. And if this conclusion is accepted, and it seems that it must be, merely on the evidence of the literary or recorded Celtic Fairy-Faith, our Psychological Theory stands proven.

The Rites of Proserpine had many counterparts. Thus, to pass on to another parallel, in the Mysteries of Eleusis the disappearance of the Maiden into the under-world, into Hades, the land of the dead, was continually re-enacted in a sacred drama, and it no doubt was one of the principal rites attending initiation. In our study of the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth, we shall return to this subject of Celtic Initiation.

### **The Voyage of Bran, Son of Febal**

We are well prepared now to enjoy the best known voyages which men, heroes, and god-men, are said to have made to Avalon, or the Land of the Living, through the invitation of a fairy woman or else of the god Manannan himself; and probably the most famous is that of the *Voyage of Bran, Son of Febal*, as so admirably translated from the original old Irish saga by Dr. Kuno Meyer.<sup>329</sup> Perhaps in all Celtic literature no poem surpasses this in natural and simple beauty.

One day Bran heard strange music behind him as he was alone in the neighbourhood of his stronghold; and as he listened, so sweet was the sound that it lulled him to sleep. When he awoke, there lay beside him a branch of silver so white with blossoms that it was not easy to distinguish the blossoms from the branch. Bran took up the branch and carried it to the royal house, and, when the hosts were assembled therein, they saw a woman in strange raiment standing on the floor. Whence she came and how, no one could tell. And as they all beheld her, she sang fifty quatrains to Bran:—

A branch of the apple-tree from Emain  
I bring, like those one knows;

Twigs of white silver are on it,  
Crystal brows with blossoms.

There is a distant isle,  
Around which sea-horses glisten:  
A fair course against the white-swelling surge—  
Four feet uphold it.

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When the song was finished, ‘the woman went from them while they knew not whither she went. And she took her branch with her. The branch sprang from Bran’s hand into the hand of the woman, nor was there strength in Bran’s hand to hold the branch.’ The next day, with the fairy spell upon him, Bran begins the voyage towards the setting sun. On the ocean he meets Manannan riding in his magic chariot over the sea-waves; and the king tells Bran that he is returning to Ireland after long ages. Parting from the Son of the Sea, Bran goes on, and the first island he and his companions reach is the ‘Island of Joy’, where one of the party is set ashore; the second isle is the ‘Land of Women’, where the queen draws Bran and his followers to her realm with a magic clew, and then entertains them for what seems no more than a year, though ‘it chanced to be many years’. After a while, homesickness seizes the adventurers and they come to a unanimous decision to return to Ireland; but they depart under a taboo not to set foot on earth, or at least not till holy water has been sprinkled on them. In their coracle they arrive before a gathering at Srub Brain, probably in West Kerry, and Bran (who may now possibly be regarded as an apparition temporarily returned from the Otherworld to bid his people farewell) announces himself, and this reply is made to him:—‘We do not know such a one, though the Voyage of Bran is in our ancient stories.’ Then one of Bran’s party, in his eagerness to land, broke the taboo; he ‘leaps from them out of the coracle. As soon as he touched the earth of Ireland, forthwith he was a heap of ashes, as though he had been in the earth for many hundred years.... Thereupon, to the people of the gathering, Bran told all his wanderings from the beginning until that

time. And he wrote these quatrains in Ogam, and then bade them farewell. And from that hour his wanderings are not known.'

### **Cormac's Adventure in the Land of Promise<sup>330</sup>**

In *Cormac's Adventure in the Land of Promise*, there is again a magic silver branch with three golden apples on it:—'One day, at dawn in May-time, Cormac, grandson of Conn, was alone on Múr Tea in Tara. He saw coming towards him a sedate(?), grey-headed warrior.... A branch of silver with three golden apples on his shoulder. Delight and amusement to the full was it to listen to the music of that branch, for men sore wounded, or women in child-bed, or folk in sickness, would fall asleep at the melody when that branch was shaken.' And the warrior tells Cormac that he has come from a land where only truth is known, where there is 'neither age nor decay nor gloom nor sadness nor envy nor jealousy nor hatred nor haughtiness'. On his promising the unknown warrior any three boons that he shall ask, Cormac is given the magic branch. The grey-headed warrior disappears suddenly; 'and Cormac knew not whither he had gone.'

'Cormac turned into the palace. The household marvelled at the branch. Cormac shook it at them, and cast them into slumber from that hour to the same time on the following day. At the end of a year the warrior comes into his meeting and asked of Cormac the consideration for his branch. "It shall be given," says Cormac. "I will take [thy daughter] Ailbe to-day," says the warrior. So he took the girl with him. The women of Tara utter three loud cries after the daughter of the king of Erin. But Cormac shook the branch at them, so that he banished grief from them all and cast them into sleep. That day month comes the warrior and takes with him Carpre Lifechair (the son of Cormac). Weeping and sorrow ceased not in Tara after the boy, and on that night no one therein ate or slept, and they were in grief and in exceeding gloom. But Cormac shook the branch at them, and they parted from [their] sorrow. The same warrior comes again. "What askest thou to-day?" says Cormac. "Thy wife," saith he, "even Ethne the Longsided,

daughter of Dunlang king of Leinster.” Then he takes away the woman with him.’ Thereupon Cormac follows the messenger, and all his people go with him. But ‘a great mist was brought upon them in the midst of the plain of the wall. Cormac found himself on a great plain alone’. It is the ‘Land of Promise’. Palaces of bronze, and houses of white silver thatched with white birds’ wings are there. ‘Then he sees in the garth a shining fountain, with five streams flowing out of it, and the hosts in turn a-drinking its water. Nine hazels of Buan grow over the well. The purple hazels drop their nuts into the fountain, and the five salmon which are in the fountain sever them, and send their husks floating down the streams. Now the sound of the falling of those streams is more melodious than any music that [men] sing.’<sup>331</sup>

Cormac having entered the fairy palace at the fountain beholds ‘the loveliest of the world’s women’. After she has been magically bathed, he bathes, and this, apparently, is symbolical of his purification in the Otherworld. Finally, at a feast, the warrior-messenger sings Cormac to sleep; and when Cormac awakes he sees beside him his wife and children, who had preceded him thither to the Land of Promise. The warrior-messenger who *took* them all is none other than the great god Manannan Mac Lir of the Tuatha De Danann.

There in the Otherworld, Cormac gains a magic cup of gold richly and wondrously wrought, which would break into three pieces if ‘three words of falsehood be spoken under it’, and the magic silver branch; and Manannan, as the god-initiator, says to Ireland’s high king:—‘Take thy family then, and take the Cup that thou mayest have it for discerning between truth and falsehood. And thou shalt have the Branch for music and delight. And on the day that thou shalt die they all will be taken from thee. I am Manannan, son of Ler, king of the Land of Promise; *and to see the Land of Promise was the reason I brought [thee] hither.* ... The fountain which thou sawest, with the five streams out of it, is the Fountain of Knowledge, and the streams are the five senses through which knowledge is obtained (?). And no one will have knowledge who drinketh not a draught out of the fountain

itself and out of the streams. The folk of many arts are those who drink of them both.’

‘Now on the morrow morning, when Cormac arose, he found himself on the green of Tara, with his wife and his son and daughter, and having his Branch and his Cup. Now that was afterwards [called] “Cormac’s Cup”, and it used to distinguish between truth and falsehood with the Gael. Howbeit, as had been promised him [by Manannan], it remained not after Cormac’s death.’<sup>332</sup>

This beautiful tale evidently echoes in an extremely poetical and symbolical manner a very ancient Celtic initiation of a king and his family into the mystic cult of the mighty god Manannan, Son of the Sea. They enter the Otherworld in a trance state, and on waking are in Erin again, spiritually enriched. The Cup of Truth is probably the symbol of having gained knowledge of the Mystery of Life and Death, and the Branch, that of the Peace and Joy which comes to all who are truly Initiated; for to have passed from the realm of mortal existence to the Realm of the Dead, of the Fairy-Folk, of the Gods, and back again, with full human consciousness all the while, was equivalent to having gained the Philosopher’s Stone, the Elixir of Life, the Cup of Truth, and to having bathed in the Fountain of Eternal Youth which confers triumph over Death and unending happiness. Thus we may have here a Celtic poetical parallel to the initiatory journey of Aeneas to the Land of the Dead or Hades.

### **The Magic Wand of Gods, Fairies, and Druids**

Manannan of the Tuatha De Danann, as a god-messenger from the invisible realm bearing the apple-branch of silver, is in externals, though not in other ways, like Hermes, the god-messenger from the realm of the gods bearing his wand of two intertwined serpents.<sup>333</sup> In modern fairy-lore this divine branch or wand is the magic wand of fairies; or where messengers like old men guide mortals to an underworld it is a staff or cane with which they strike the rock hiding the secret entrance.

The Irish Druids made their wands of divination from the yew-tree; and, like the ancient priests of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, are believed to have controlled spirits, fairies, daemons, elementals, and ghosts while making such divinations. It will help us to understand how closely the ancient symbols have affected our own life and age—though we have forgotten their relation with the Otherworld—by offering a few examples, beginning with the ancient Irish bards who were associated with the Druids. A wand in the form of a symbolic branch, like a little spike or crescent with gently tinkling bells upon it, was borne by them; and in the piece called *Mesca Ulad* or ‘Inebriety of the Ultonians’<sup>334</sup> it is said of the chief bard of Ulster, Sencha, that in the midst of a bloody fray he ‘waved the peaceful branch of Sencha, and all the men of Ulster were silent, quiet’. In *Agallamh an dá Shuadh* or the ‘Dialogue of the two Sages’,<sup>335</sup> the mystic symbol used by gods, fairies, magicians, and by all initiates who know the mystery of life and death, is thus described as a Druid symbol:—‘Neidhe’ (a young bard who aspired to succeed his father as chief poet of Ulster), ‘made his journey with a silver branch over him. The *Anradhs*, or poets of the second order, carried a silver branch, but the *Ollamhs*, or chief poets, carried a branch of gold; all other poets bore a branch of bronze.’<sup>336</sup> Modern and ancient parallels are world-wide, among the most civilized as among the least civilized peoples, and in civil or religious life among ourselves. Thus, it was with a magic rod that Moses struck the rock and pure water gushed forth, and he raised the same rod and the Red Sea opened; kings hold their sceptres no less than Neptune his trident; popes and bishops have their croziers; in the Roman Church there are little wand-like objects used to perform benedictions; high civil officials have their mace of office; and all the world over there are the wands of magicians and of medicine-men.

### **The Sick-Bed of Cuchulainn**

We turn now to the story of the *Sick-Bed of Cuchulainn*.<sup>337</sup> And this is how the great hero of Ulster was fairy-struck. Manannan Mac Lir, tiring of

his wife Fand, had deserted her, and so she, wishing to marry Cuchulainn, went to Ireland with her sister Liban. Taking the form of two birds bound together by a chain of red gold, Fand and Liban rested on a lake in Ulster where Cuchulainn should see them as he was hunting. To capture the two birds, Cuchulainn cast a javelin at them, but they escaped, though injured. Disappointed at a failure like this, which for him was most unusual, Cuchulainn went away to a menhir where he sat down and fell asleep. Then he saw two women, one in a green and one in a crimson cloak; and the woman in green coming up to him laughed and struck him with a whip-like object. The woman in crimson did likewise, and alternately the two women kept striking him till they left him almost dead. And straightway the mighty hero of the Red Branch Knights took to his bed with a strange malady, which no Druid or doctor in all Ireland could cure.

Till the end of a year Cuchulainn lay on his sick-bed at Emain-Macha without speaking to any one. Then—the day before *Samain* (November Eve)—there came to him an unknown messenger who sang to him a wonderful song, promising to cure him of his malady if he would only accept the invitation of the daughters of Aed Abrat to visit them in the Otherworld. When the song was ended, the messenger departed, ‘and they knew not whence he came nor whither he went.’ Thereupon Cuchulainn went to the place where the malady had been put on him, and there appeared to him again the woman in the green cloak. She let it be known to Cuchulainn that she was Liban, and that she was longing for him to go with her to the Plain of Delight to fight against Labraid’s enemies. And she promised Cuchulainn as a reward that he would get Fand to wife. But Cuchulainn would not accept the invitation without knowing to what country he was called. So he sent his charioteer Laeg to bring back from there a report. Laeg went with the fairy woman in a boat of bronze, and returned; and when Cuchulainn heard from him the wonderful glories of that Otherworld of the *Sidhe* he willingly set out for it.

After Cuchulainn had overthrown Labraid’s enemies and had been in the Otherworld a month with the fairy woman Fand, he returned to Ireland alone; though afterwards in a place agreed upon, Fand joined him. Emer,



the wife of Cuchulainn, was overcome with jealousy and schemed to kill Fand, so that Fand returned to her husband the god Manannan and he received her back again. When she was gone Cuchulainn could not be consoled; but Emer obtained from the Druids a magic drink for Cuchulainn, which made him forget all about the Otherworld and the fairy woman Fand. And another drink the Druids gave to Emer so that she forgot all her jealousy; and then Manannan Mac Lir himself came and shook his mantle between Cuchulainn and Fand to prevent the two ever meeting again. And thus it was that the *Sidhe*-women failed to steal away the great Cuchulainn. The magic of the Druids and the power of the Tuatha De Danann king triumphed; and the Champion of Ulster did not go to the Otherworld until he met a natural death in that last great fight.<sup>338</sup>

### **Ossian's Return from Fairyland<sup>339</sup>**

Ossian too, like Cuchulainn, was enticed into Fairyland by a fairy woman:—She carries him away on a white horse, across the Western Ocean; and as they are moving over the sea-waves they behold a fair maid on a brown horse, and she holding in her right hand a golden apple. After the hero had married his fairy abductress and lived in the Otherworld for three hundred years, an overpowering desire to return to Ireland and join again in the councils of his dearly beloved Fenian Brotherhood took possession of him, and he set out on the same white horse on which he travelled thence with the fairy princess, for such was his wife. And she, as he went, thrice warned him not to lay his 'foot on level ground', and he heard from her the startling announcement that the Fenians were all gone and Ireland quite changed.

Safe in Ireland, Ossian seeks the Brotherhood, and though he goes from one place to another where his old companions were wont to meet, not one of them can he find. And how changed is all the land! He realizes at last how long he must have been away. The words of his fairy wife are too sadly true.

While Ossian wanders disconsolately over Ireland, he comes to a multitude of men trying to move an enormous slab of marble, under which some other men are lying. ‘Ossian’s assistance is asked, and he generously gives it. But in leaning over his horse, to take up the stone with one hand, the girth breaks, and he falls. Straightway the white horse fled away on his way home, and Ossian became aged, decrepit, and blind.’<sup>340</sup>

### **The Going of Lanval to Avalon**

The fairy romances which were recorded during the mediaeval period in continental Europe report a surprisingly large number of heroes who, like Cuchulainn and Ossian, fell under the power of fairy women or *fées*, and followed one of them to the Apple-Land or Avalon. Besides Arthur, they include Sir Lancelot, Sir Gawayne, Ogier, Guingemor and Lanval (see pp. 325–6). The story of Lanval is told by Marie de France in one of her *Lais*, and is so famous a one that we shall briefly outline it:—

Lanval was a mediaeval knight who lived during the time of King Arthur in Brittany. He was young and very beautiful, so that one of the fairy damsels fell in love with him; and in the true Irish fashion—himself and his fairy sweetheart mounted on the same fairy horse—the two went riding off to Fairyland:—

On the horse behind her  
With full rush Lanval jumped.  
With her he goes away into Avalon,  
According to what the Briton tells us,  
Into an isle, which is very beautiful.<sup>341</sup>

### **The Voyage of Teigue, Son of Cian**

There is another type of *imram* in which through adventure rather than through invitation from one of the fairy beings, men enter the Otherworld; as illustrated by the *Voyage of Mael-Duin*,<sup>342</sup> and by the still more beautiful *Voyage of Teigue, Son of Cian*. This last old Irish story summarizes many of the Otherworld elements we have so far considered, and (though it shows Christian influences) gives us a very clear picture of the Land of Youth amid the Western Ocean—a land such as Ponce De Leon and so many brave navigators sought in America:—

Teigue, son of Cian, and heir to the kingship of West Munster, with his followers set out from Ireland to recover his wife and brethren who had been stolen by Cathmann and his band of sea-rovers from Fresen, a land near Spain. It was the time of the spring tide, when the sea was rough, and storms coming on the voyagers they lost their way. After about nine weeks they came to a land fairer than any land they had ever beheld—it was the Happy Otherworld. In it were many ‘red-laden apple-trees, with leafy oaks too in it, and hazels yellow with nuts in their clusters’; and ‘a wide smooth plain clad in flowering clover all bedewed with honey’. In the midst of this plain Teigue and his companions descried three hills, and on each of them an impregnable place of strength. At the first stronghold, which had a rampart of white marble, Teigue was welcomed by ‘a white-bodied lady, fairest of the whole world’s women’; and she told him that the stronghold is the abode ‘of Ireland’s kings: from Heremon son of Milesius to Conn of the Hundred Battles, who was the last to pass into it’. Teigue with his people moved on till they gained the middle *dún*, the *dún* with a rampart of gold. There also ‘they found a queen of gracious form, and she draped in vesture of a golden fabric’, who tells them that they are in the Earth’s fourth paradise.

At the third *dún*, the *dún* with a silver rampart, Teigue and his party met Connla, the son of Conn of the Hundred Battles. ‘In his hand he held a fragrant apple having the hue of gold; a third part of it he would eat, and still, for all he consumed, never a whit would it be diminished.’ And at his side sat a young woman of many charms, who spake thus to Teigue:—‘I had bestowed on him (i.e. felt for him) true affection’s love, and therefore

wrought to have him come to me in this land; where our delight, both of us, is to continue in looking at and in perpetual contemplation of one another: above and beyond which we pass not, to commit impurity or fleshly sin whatsoever.’ Both Connla and his friend were clad in vestments of green—like the fairy-folk; and their step was so light that hardly did the beautiful clover-heads bend beneath it. And the apple ‘it was that supported the pair of them and, when once they had partaken of it, nor age nor dimness could affect them’. When Teigue asked who occupied the *dún* with the silver rampart the maiden with Connla made this reply:—‘In that one there is not any one. For behoof of the righteous kings that after acceptance of the Faith shall rule Ireland it is that yonder *dún* stands ready; and we are they who, until such those virtuous princes shall enter into it, keep the same: in the which, Teigue my soul, thou too shalt have an appointed place.’ ‘Obliquely across the most capacious palace Teigue looked away’ (as he was observing the beauty of the yet uninhabited *dún*), ‘and marked a thickly furnished wide-spreading apple-tree that bare blossoms and ripe fruit both. “What is that apple-tree beyond?” he asked [of the maiden], and she made answer:—“That apple-tree’s fruit it is that for meat shall serve the congregation which is to be in this mansion, *and a single apple of the same it was that brought (coaxed away) Connla to me.*”’

Then the party rested, and there came towards them a whole array of feminine beauty, among which was a lovely damsel of refined form who foretold to Teigue the manner and time of his death, and as a token she gave him ‘a fair cup of emerald hue, in which are inherent many virtues: for [among other things] though it were but water poured into it, incontinently it would be wine’. And this was her farewell message to Teigue:—‘From that (the cup), let not thine hand part; but have it for a token: when it shall escape from thee, then in a short time after shalt thou die; and where thou shalt meet thy death is in the glen that is on Boyne’s side: there the earth shall grow into a great hill, and the name that it shall bear will be *croidhe eisse*; there too (when thou shalt first have been wounded by a roving wild hart, after which Allmarachs will slay thee) I will bury thy body; but thy

soul shall come with me hither, where till the Judgement's Day thou shalt assume a body light and ethereal.'

As the party led by Teigue were going down to the seashore to depart, the girl who had been escorting them asked 'how long they had been in the country'. 'In our estimation,' they replied, 'we are in it but one single day.' She, however, said: 'For an entire twelvemonth ye are in it; during which time ye have had neither meat nor drink, nor, how long soever ye should be here, would cold or thirst or hunger assail you.' And when Teigue and his party had entered their *currach* they looked astern, but 'they saw not the land from which they came, for incontinently an obscuring magic veil was drawn over it'.<sup>343</sup>

### **The Adventures of Art, Son of Conn**

This interesting *imram* combines, in a way, the type of tale wherein a fairy woman comes from the Otherworld to our world—though in this tale she is banished from there—and the type of tale wherein the Otherworld is found through adventure:—

Bécuma Cneisgel, a woman of the Tuatha De Danann, because of a transgression she had committed in the Otherworld with Gaidiar, Manannan's son, was banished thence. She came to Conn, high king of Ireland, and she bound him to do her will; and her judgement was that Art, the son of Conn, should not come to Tara until a year was past. During the year, Conn and Bécuma were together in Tara, 'and there was neither corn nor milk in Ireland during that time.' The Tuatha De Danann sent this dreadful famine; for they, as agricultural gods, thus showed their displeasure at the unholy life of Ireland's high king with the evil woman whom they had banished. The Druids of all Ireland being called together, declared that to appease the Tuatha De Danann 'the son of a sinless couple should be brought to Ireland and slain before Tara, and his blood mingled with the soil of Tara' (cf. p. 436). It was Conn himself who set out for the Otherworld and found there the sinless boy, the son of the queen of that

world, and he brought him back to Tara. A strange event saves the youth:—‘Just then they (the assembly of people and Druids, with Conn, Art, and Finn) heard the lowing of a cow, and a woman wailing continually behind it. And they saw the cow and the woman making for the assembly.’ The woman had come from the Otherworld to save Segda; and the cow was accepted as a sacrifice in place of Segda, owing to the wonders it disclosed; for its two bags when opened contained two birds—one with one leg and one with twelve legs, and ‘the one-legged bird prevailed over the bird with twelve legs’. Then rising up and calling Conn aside, the woman declared to him that until he put aside the evil woman Bécuma ‘a third of its corn, and its milk, and its mast’ should be lacking to Ireland. ‘And she took leave of them then and went off with her son, even Segda. And jewels and treasures were offered to them, but they refused them.’

In the second part of this complex tale, Bécuma and Art are together playing a game. Art finally loses, because the men of the *sidh* (like invisible spirits) began to steal the pieces with which he and the woman play; and, as a result, Bécuma put on him this taboo:—‘Thou shalt not eat food in Ireland until thou bring with thee Delbchaem, the daughter of Morgan.’ ‘Where is she?’ asked Art. ‘In an isle amid the sea, and that is all the information that thou wilt get.’ ‘And he put forth the coracle, and travelled the sea from one isle to another until he came to a fair, strange island,’ the Otherworld. The blooming women of that land entertain the prince of Ireland during six weeks, and instruct him in all the dangers he must face and the conquests he must make.

Having successfully met all the ordeals, Art secures Delbchaem, daughter of Morgan the king of the ‘Land of Wonders’, and returns to Ireland. ‘She had a green cloak of one hue about her, with a gold pin in it over her breast, and long, fair, very golden hair. She had dark-black eyebrows, and flashing grey eyes in her head, and a snowy-white body.’ And upon seeing the chaste and noble Delbchaem with Art, Bécuma, the banished woman of the Tuatha De Danann, lamenting, departs from Tara for ever.<sup>344</sup>

## Otherworld Quests of Cuchulainn and of Arthur

There is yet the distinct class of tales about journeys to a fairy world which is a Hades world beneath the earth, or in some land of death, rather than amid the waves of the Western Ocean. Thus there is a curious poem in the *Book of the Dun Cow* describing an expedition led by Cuchulainn to the stronghold of Scáth in the land of Scáth, or, as the name means, land of Shades, where the hero gains the king's cauldron.<sup>345</sup> And the poem suggests why so few who invaded that Hades world ever returned—perhaps why, mystically speaking, so few men could escape either through initiation or re-birth the natural confusion and forgetfulness arising out of death.

In the *Book of Taliessin* a weird poem, *Preiddeu Annwfn*, or the 'Spoils of Annwn', describes, in language not always clear, how the Brythonic Arthur made a similar journey to the Welsh Hades world named Annwn, where he, like Cuchulainn in Scáth, gained possession of a magic cauldron—a pagan Celtic type of the Holy Grail—which furnishes inexhaustible food though 'it will not boil the food of a coward'. But in stanzas iii and iv of *Preiddeu Annwfn*, Annwn, or Uffern as it is otherwise called, is not an underground realm, but some world to be reached like the Gaelic Land of Promise by sea. Annwn is also called *Caer Sidi*, which in another poem of the *Book of Taliessin* (No. XIV) is thought of as an island of immortal youth amid 'the streams of the ocean' where there is a food-giving fountain.<sup>346</sup>

## Literary Evolution of the Happy Otherworld Idea

We have now noticed two chief classes of Otherworld legends. In one there is the beautiful and peaceful *Tír Innambéo* or 'Land of the Living' under Manannan's rule across the seas, and its fairy inhabitants are principally women who lure away noble men and youths through love for them; in the other there is a Hades world—often confused with the former—in which great heroes go on some mysterious quest. Sometimes this Hades world is inseparable from the underground palaces or world of the

Tuatha De Danann. Again, it may be an underlake fairy-realm like that entered by Laeghaire and his fifty companions (see p. 302); or, as in *Gilla Decair*,<sup>347</sup> of late composition, it is an under-well land wherein Dermot has adventures. And, in a similar tale, Murough, on the invitation of a mysterious stranger who comes out of a lake and then disappears 'like the mist of a winter fog or the whiff of a March wind', dives beneath the lake's waters, and is escorted to the palace of King Under-Wave, wherein he sees the stranger as the water-king himself sitting on a golden throne (cf. pp. 63–4). In continual feasting there Murough passes a day and a year, thinking the time only a few days.<sup>348</sup>

As a rule the Hades world, or underground and under-wave world, is unlike Manannan's peaceful ocean realm, being often described as a place of much strife; and mortals are usually induced to enter it to aid in settling the troubles of its fairy inhabitants.

All the numerous variations of Otherworld tales now extant in Celtic literature show a common pre-Christian origin, though almost all of them have been coloured by Christian ideas about heaven, hell, and purgatory. From the earliest tales of the over-sea Otherworld type, like those of Bran, Maelduin, and Connla, all of which may go back to the early eighth century as compositions, the christianizing influence is already clearly begun; and in the *Voyage of Snedgus and of Mac Riagla*, of the late ninth century, this influence predominates.<sup>349</sup> Purely Christian texts of about the same period or later describe the Christian heaven as though it were the pagan Otherworld. Some of these, like the Latin version of the tale of *St. Brendan's Voyage*, greatly influenced European literature, and probably contributed to the discovery of the New World.<sup>349</sup>

The combination of Christian and pagan Celtic ideas is well shown in the *Voyage of the Húi Corra*<sup>350</sup>:—'Thereafter a wondrous island was shown to them. A psalm-singing venerable old man, with fair, builded churches and beautiful bright altars. Beautiful green grass therein. A dew of honey on its grass. Little ever-lovely bees and fair, purple-headed birds a-chanting music therein, so that [merely] to listen to them was enough of delight.' But in another passage the Christian scribe describes Otherworld birds as souls,



some of them in hell:—"Of the land of Erin am I," quoth the bird, "and I am the soul of a woman, and I am a monness unto thee," she saith to the elder.... "Come ye to another place," saith the bird, "to hearken to yon birds. The birds that ye see are the souls that come on Sunday out of hell." Still other islands are definitely made into Christian hells full of fire, wherein wailing and shrieking men are being mangled by the beaks and talons of birds.

But sometimes, like the legends about the Tuatha De Danann, the legends about the Otherworld were taken literally and most seriously by some early Irish-Christian saints. Professor J. Loth records a very interesting episode, how St. Malo and his teacher Brandan actually set out on an ocean voyage to find the Heaven-world of the pagan Celts:—"Saint Malo, when a youth, embarks with his teacher Brandan in a boat, in search of that mysterious country; after some days, the waves drive him back rebuffed and discouraged upon the seashore. An angel opens his eyes: the land of eternal peace and of eternal youth is that which Christianity promises to its elect."<sup>351</sup>

Not only was the Celtic Otherworld gradually changed into a Christian Heaven, or Hell, from the eighth century onward, but its divine inhabitants soon came to suffer the rationalization commonly applied to their race; and the transcribers began to set them down as actual personages of Irish history. As we have already observed, the Tuatha De Danann were shorn of their immortality, and were given in exchange all the passions and shortcomings of men, and made subject to disease and death. This perhaps was a natural anthropomorphic process such as is met with in all mythologies. Celtic myth and mysticism, wherein may yet be read the deepest secrets of life and death, supplied names and legends to fill out a christianized scheme of Irish chronology, which was made to begin some six thousand years ago with Adam.

A few of the pagan legends, however, met very fair treatment at the hands of poetical and patriotic Christian transcribers. Thus in *Adamnan's Vision*,<sup>352</sup> though the Celtic Otherworld has become 'the Land of the Saints', its primal character is clearly discernible: to reach it a sea voyage is

necessary; and it is a land where there is no pride, falsehood, envy, disease or death, 'wherein is delight of every goodness.' In it there are singing birds, and for sustenance while there the voyagers need only to hear its music and 'sate themselves with the odour which is in the Land'.

Again, in the *Book of Leinster*, and in later MSS., there is a *dinnshenchas* of almost primal pagan purity. It alludes to *Clidna's Wave*, that of Tuag Inbir:—To Tuag, daughter of Conall, Manannan the sea-god sent a messenger, a Druid of the Tuatha De Danann in the shape of a woman. The Druid chanted a sleep spell over the girl, and while he left her on the seashore to look for a boat in which to embark for the 'Land of Everliving Women', a wave of the flood tide came and drowned her. But the Oxford version of the same tale doubts whether the maiden was drowned, for it suggests, 'Or maybe it (the wave) was Manannan himself that was carrying her off.'<sup>353</sup> Thus the scribe understood that to go to Manannan's world literally meant entering a sleep or trance state, or, what is equivalent in the case of the maiden whom Manannan summoned, the passage through death from the physical body. And still, to-day, the Irish peasant believes that the 'good people' take to their invisible world all young men or maidens who meet death; or that one under a fairy spell may go to their world for a short time, and come back to our world again.

We have frequently emphasized how truly the modern Celtic peasant in certain non-commercialized localities has kept to the faith of his pagan ancestors, while the learned Christian scribes have often departed widely from it. The story of the voyage of Fionn to the Otherworld,<sup>354</sup> which Campbell found living among Scotch peasants as late as the last century, adds a striking proof of this assertion. So does Michael Comyn's peasant version of Ossian in the 'Land of Youth' (as outlined above, p. 346), which, though dating from about 1749, has all the natural character of the best ancient tales, like those about Bran and Cormac. We are inclined, therefore, to attach a value even higher than we have already done to the testimony of the living Fairy-Faith which confirms in so many parallel ways, as has been shown, the Fairy-Faith of the remote past. Mr. W. B. Yeats, the Irish poet, adequately sums up this matter by saying, 'But the Irish peasant believes

that the utmost he can dream was once or still is a reality by his own door. He will point to some mountain and tell you that some famous hero or beauty lived and sorrowed there, or he will tell you that Tir-na-nog, the Country of the Young, the old Celtic paradise—the Land of the Living Heart, as it used to be called—is all about him.’<sup>355</sup>

At the end of his long and careful study of the Celtic Otherworld, Alfred Nutt arrived at the tentative conclusion which coincides with our own, that ‘The vision of a Happy Otherworld found in Irish mythic romances of the eighth and following centuries is substantially pre-Christian’, that its closest analogues are in Hellenic myth, and that with these ‘it forms the most archaic Aryan presentation of the divine and happy land we possess’.<sup>356</sup>

## **Chapter VII**

### **The Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth<sup>357</sup>**

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‘It seems as if Ossian’s was a premature return. To-day he might find comrades come back from Tir-na-nog for the uplifting of their race. Perhaps to many a young spirit standing up among us Cailte might speak as to Mongan, saying: “I was with thee, with Finn.”’—A. E.

Re-birth and Otherworld—As a Christian doctrine—General historical survey—According to the Barddas MSS.; according to ancient and modern authorities—Reincarnation of the Tuatha De Danann—King Mongan’s re-birth—Etain’s birth—Dermot’s pre-existence—Tuan’s re-birth—Re-birth among Brythons—Arthur as a reincarnate hero—Non-Celtic parallels—Re-birth among modern Celts: in Ireland; in Scotland; in the Isle of Man; in Wales; in Cornwall; in Brittany—Origin and evolution of Celtic Re-birth Doctrine.

## **Relation with the Otherworld**

However much the conception of the Otherworld among the ancient Greeks may have differed from that among the Celts, it was to both peoples alike inseparably connected with their belief in re-birth. Alfred Nutt, who studied this intimate relation more carefully perhaps than any other Celtic folk-lorist, has said of it:—‘In Greek mythology as in Irish, the conception of re-birth proves to be a dominant factor of the same religious system in which Elysium is likewise an essential feature.’ Death, as many initiates have proclaimed in their mystical writings, is but a going to that Otherworld from this world, and Birth a coming back again;<sup>358</sup> and Buddha announced it as his mission to teach men the way to be delivered out of this eternal Circle of Existence.

## **Historical Survey of the Re-Birth Doctrine**

Among ourselves the doctrine may seem a strange one, though among the great nations of antiquity—the Egyptians, Indians, Greeks, and Celts—it was taught in the Mysteries and Priest-Schools, and formed the cornerstone of the most important philosophical systems like those of Buddha, Pythagoras, Plato, the Neo-Platonists, and the Druids. The Alexandrian Jews, also, were familiar with the doctrine, as implied in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (viii. 19, 20), and in the writings of Philo. It was one of the teachings in the Schools of Alexandria, and thus directly shaped the thoughts of some of the early Church Fathers—for example, Tertullian of Carthage (circa A. D. 160–240), and Origen of Alexandria (circa A. D. 185–254). It is of considerable historical importance for us at this point to consider at some length if Christians in the first centuries held or were greatly influenced by the re-birth doctrine, because, as we shall presently observe, the probable influence of Christian on pagan Celtic beliefs may

have been at a certain period very deep and even the most important reshaping influence.

As an examination of Origen's *De Principiis* proves, Origen himself believed in the doctrine.<sup>359</sup> But the theologians who created the Greek canons of the Fifth Council disagreed with Origen's views, and condemned Origen for believing, among other things called by them heresies, that Jesus Christ will be reincarnated and suffer on earth a second time to save the daemons,<sup>360</sup> an order of spiritual beings regarded by some ancient philosophers as destined to evolve into human souls. Tertullian, contemporary with Origen, in his *De Anima* considers whether or not the doctrine of re-birth can be regarded as Christian in view of the declaration by Jesus Christ that John the Baptist was Elias (or Elijah), the old Jewish prophet, come again:—‘And if ye are willing to receive it (or him), this (John the Baptist) is Elijah, which is to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.’<sup>361</sup> Tertullian concludes, and modern Christian theologians frequently echo him (upon comparing Malachi iv. 5), that all the New Testament writers mean to convey is that John the Baptist possessed or acted in ‘the spirit and power’ of Elias, but was not actually a reincarnation of Elias, since he did not possess ‘the soul and body’ of Elias.<sup>362</sup> Had Tertullian been a mystic and not merely a theologian with a personal bias against the mystery teachings, which bias he shows throughout his *De Anima*, it is quite evident that he would have been on this doctrinal matter in agreement with Origen, who was both a mystic and a theologian,<sup>363</sup> and, then, probably with such an agreement of these two eminent Church Fathers on record before the time when Christian councils met to determine canonical and orthodox beliefs, the doctrine of re-birth would never have been expurgated from Christianity.<sup>364</sup>

In the *Pistis Sophia*,<sup>365</sup> an ancient Gnostic-Christian work, which contains what are alleged to be some of Jesus Christ's esoteric teachings to his disciples, it is clearly stated (contrary to Tertullian's argument, but in accord with what we may assume Origen's view would have been) that John the Baptist was the reincarnation of Elias.<sup>366</sup> The same work further

expounds the doctrine of re-birth as a teaching of Jesus Christ which applies not to particular personages only, like Elias, but as a universal law governing the lives of all mankind.<sup>367</sup>

As our discussion has made evident, during the first centuries the re-birth doctrine was undoubtedly well known to Alexandrian Christians. Among other early Christian theologians and philosophers who held some form of a re-birth doctrine, were Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais (circa 375–414), Boethius, a Roman (circa 475–525), and Psellus, a native of Andros (second half of ninth century). In addition to the many Gnostic-Christian sects, the Manichaeans, who comprised more than seventy sects connected with the primitive Church, also promulgated the re-birth doctrine.<sup>368</sup> Along with the condemnation of the Gnostics and Manichaeans as heretical, the doctrine of re-birth was likewise condemned by various ecclesiastical bodies and councils. This was the declaration by the Council of Constantinople in 553:—‘Whosoever shall support the mythical doctrine of the pre-existence of the Soul, and the consequent wonderful opinion of its return, let him be anathema.’ And so, after centuries of controversy, the ancient doctrine ceased to be regarded as Christian.<sup>369</sup> It is very likely, however, as will be shown in due order, that a few of the early Celtic missionaries, always famous for their Celtic independence even in questions touching Christian theology and government, did not feel themselves bound by the decisions of continental Church Councils with respect to this particular doctrine.

During the mediaeval period in Europe, the re-birth doctrine continued to live on in secret among many of the alchemists and mystical philosophers, and among such Druids as survived religious persecution; and it has come down from that period to this through Orders like the Rosicrucian Order—an Order which seems to have had an unbroken existence from the Middle Ages or earlier—and likewise through the unbroken traditions of modern Druidism. In our own times there is what may be called a renaissance of the ancient doctrine in Europe and America—especially in England, Germany, France, and the United States—through various philosophical or religious societies; some of them founding their

teachings and literature on the ancient and mediaeval mystical philosophers, while others stand as the representatives in the West of the mystical schools of modern India, which, like modern Druidism, claim to have existed from what we call prehistoric times.<sup>370</sup> To-day in the Roman Church eminent theologians have called the doctrine of Purgatory the Christian counterpart of the philosophical doctrine of re-birth;<sup>371</sup> and the real significance of this opinion will appear in our later study of St. Patrick's Purgatory which, as we hold, is connected more or less definitely with the pagan-Irish doctrines of the underworld of the *Sidhe*-folk and spirits, as well as shades of the dead, and with the Celtic-Druidic Doctrine of Reincarnation.

Scientifically speaking, as shown in the Welsh Triads of Bardism, the ancient Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth represented for the priestly and bardic initiates an exposition of the complete cycle of human evolution; that is to say, it included what we now call Darwinism—which explains only the purely physical evolution of the body which man inhabits as an inheritance from the brute kingdom—and also besides Darwinism, a comprehensive theory of man's own evolution as a spiritual being both apart from and in a physical body, on his road to the perfection which comes from knowing completely the earth-plane of existence. And in time, judging from the rapid advance of the present age, our own science through psychical research may work back to the old mystery teachings and declare them scientific. (See <sup>chap. xii.</sup>)

### **According to the Barddas MSS.**

With this preliminary survey of the subject we may now proceed to show how in the Celtic scheme of evolution the Otherworld with all its gods, fairies, and invisible beings, and this world with all its visible beings, form the two poles of life or conscious existence. Let us begin with purely philosophical conceptions, going first to the Welsh *Barddas*,<sup>372</sup> where it is said 'There are three circles of existence: the circle of Ceugant (the circle of Infinity), where there is neither animate nor inanimate save God, and God

only can traverse it; the circle of Abred (the circle of Re-birth), where the dead is stronger than the living, and where every principal existence is derived from the dead, and man has traversed it; and the circle of Gwynvyd (the circle of the white, i.e. the circle of Perfection), where the living is stronger than the dead, and where every principal existence is derived from the living and life, that is, from God, and man shall traverse it; nor will man attain to perfect knowledge, until he shall have fully traversed the circle of Gwynvyd, for no absolute knowledge can be obtained but by the experience of the senses, from having borne and suffered every condition and incident'.<sup>373</sup> ... 'The three stabilities of knowledge: to have traversed every state of life; to remember every state and its incidents; and to be able to traverse every state, as one would wish, for the sake of experience and judgement; and this will be obtained in the circle of Gwynvyd.'<sup>374</sup>

Thus *Barddas* expounds the complete Bardic scheme of evolution as one in which the monad or soul, as a knowledge of physical existence is gradually unfolded to it, passes through every phase of material embodiment before it enters the human kingdom, where, for the first time exercising freewill in a physical body, it becomes responsible for all its acts. The Bardic doctrine as otherwise stated is 'that the soul commenced its course in the lowest water-animalcule, and passed at death to other bodies of a superior order, successively, and in regular gradation, until it entered that of man. Humanity is a state of liberty, where man can attach himself to either good or evil, as he pleases'.<sup>375</sup> Once in the human kingdom the soul begins a second period of growth altogether different from that preceding—a period of growth toward divinity; and with this, in our study, we are chiefly concerned. It seems clear that the circle of Gwynvyd finds its parallel in the Nirvana of Buddhism, being, like it, a state of absolute knowledge and felicity in which man becomes a divine being, a veritable god.<sup>376</sup> We see in all this the intimate relation which there was thought to be between what we call the state of life and the state of death, between the world of men and the world of gods, fairies, demons, spirits, and shades. Our next step must be to show, first, what some other authorities have had to say about this relation, and then, second, and fundamentally, that gods or



fairy-folk like the *Sidhe* or Tuatha De Danann could come to this world not only as we have been seeing them come as fairy women, fairy men, and gods, at will visible or invisible to mortals, but also through submitting to human birth.

### **According to Ancient and Modern Authorities**

First, therefore, for opinions; and we may go to the ancients and then to the moderns. Here are a few from Julius Caesar:—‘In particular they (the Druids) wish to inculcate this idea, that souls do not die, but pass from one body to another.’<sup>377</sup> ‘The Gauls declare that they have all sprung from their father Dis (or Pluto), and this they say was delivered to them by the Druids.’<sup>377</sup> And the testimony of Caesar is confirmed by Diodorus Siculus,<sup>378</sup> and by Pomponius Mela.<sup>379</sup> Lucan, in the *Pharsalia*,<sup>380</sup> addressing the Druids on their doctrine of re-birth says:—‘If you know what you sing, death is the centre of a long life.’ And again in the same passage he observes:—‘Happy the folk upon whom the Bear looks down, happy in this error, whom of fears the greatest moves not, the dread of death. Hence their warrior’s heart hurls them against the steel, hence their ready welcome of death, and the thought that it were a coward’s part to grudge a life sure of its return.’<sup>381</sup> Dr. Douglas Hyde, in his *Literary History of Ireland* (p. 95), speaking for the Irish people, says of the re-birth doctrine:—‘... the idea of re-birth which forms part of half a dozen existing Irish sagas, was perfectly familiar to the Irish Gael....’ According to another modern Celtic authority, D’Arbois de Jubainville, two chief Celtic doctrines or beliefs were the return of the ghosts of the dead and the re-birth of the same individuality in a new human body here on this planet.<sup>382</sup>

### **Reincarnation of the Tuatha De Danann**

We proceed now directly to show that there was also a belief, probably widespread, among the ancient Irish that divine personages, national heroes who are members of the Tuatha De Danann or *Sidhe* race, and great men, can be reincarnated, that is to say, can descend to this plane of existence and be as mortals more than once. This aspect of the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth has been clearly set forth by the publications of such eminent Celtic folklorists as Alfred Nutt and Miss Eleanor Hull. Miss Hull, in her study of *Old Irish Tabus, or Gesa*,<sup>383</sup> referring to the Cuchulainn Cycle of Irish literature and mythology, writes thus:—‘There is no doubt that all the chief personages of this cycle were regarded as the direct descendants, or it would be more correct to say, as avatars or reincarnations of the early gods. Not only are their pedigrees traced up to the Tuatha Dé Danann, but there are indications in the birth-stories of nearly all the principal personages that they are looked upon simply as divine beings reborn on the human plane of life. These indications are mysterious, and most of the tales which deal with them show signs of having been altered, perhaps intentionally, by the Christian transcribers. The doctrine of re-birth was naturally not one acceptable to them.... The goddess Etain becomes the mortal wife of a king of Ireland.... Conchobhar, moreover, is spoken of as a terrestrial god;<sup>384</sup> and Dechtire, his sister, and the mother of Cúchulainn, is called a goddess.<sup>385</sup> In the case of Cúchulainn himself, it is distinctly noted that he is the avatar of Lugh lamhfada (long-hand), the sun-deity<sup>386</sup> of the earliest cycle. Lugh appears to Dechtire, the mother of Cúchulainn, and tells her that he himself is her little child, i.e. that the child is a reincarnation of himself; and Cúchulainn, when inquired of as to his birth, points proudly to his descent from Lugh. When, too, it is proposed to find a wife for the hero, the reason assigned is, that they knew “that his re-birth would be of himself” (i.e. that only from himself could another such as he have origin).’<sup>387</sup> We have in this last a clue to the popular Irish belief regarding the re-birth of beings of a god-like nature. D’Arbois de Jubainville has shown,<sup>388</sup> also, that the grandfather of Cuchulainn, son of Sualtaim, was from the country of the *Sidhe*, and so was Ethné Ingubé, the sister of Sualtaim. And Dechtire, the mother of Cuchulainn, was the daughter of the

Druid Cathba and the brother of King Conchobhar. Thus the ancestry of the great hero of the Red Branch Knights of Ulster is both royal and divine. And Conall Cernach, Cuchulainn's comrade and avenger, apparently from a tale in the *Cóir Anmann* (Fitness of Names), composed probably during the twelfth century, was also a reincarnated Tuatha De Danann hero.<sup>389</sup>

Practically all the extant manuscripts dealing with the ancient literature and mythology of the Gaels were written by Christian scribes or else copied by them from older manuscripts, so that, as Miss Hull points out, what few Irish re-birth stories have come down to us—and they are probably but remnants of an extensive re-birth literature like that of India—have been more or less altered. Yet to these scholarly scribes of the early monastic schools, who kept alive the sacred fire of learning while their own country was being plundered by foreign invaders and the rest of mediaeval Europe plunged in warfare, the world owes a debt of gratitude; for to their efforts alone, in spite of a reshaping of matter naturally to be expected, is due almost everything recorded on parchments concerning pagan Ireland.

### **The Re-birth Story Concerning King Mongan**

We have preserved to us a remarkable re-birth story in which the characters are known to be historical.<sup>390</sup> It concerns a quarrel between the king of Ulster, Mongan, son of Fiachna—who, according to the *Annals of Ireland by the Four Masters* (i. 245), was killed in A. D. 620 by Arthur, son of Bior— and Forgoll, the poet of Mongan.<sup>391</sup> The dispute between them was as to the place of the death of Fothad Airgdech, a king of Ireland who was killed by Cailte, one of the warriors of Find, in a battle whose date is fixed by the *Four Masters* in A. D. 285.<sup>392</sup> Forgoll pretended that Fothad had been killed at Duffry, in Leinster, and Mongan asserted that it was on the river Larne (anciently Ollarba) in County Antrim. Enraged at being contradicted, even though it were by the king, Forgoll threatened Mongan with terrible incantations; and it was agreed that unless Mongan proved his assertion within three days, his queen should pass under the control of

Forgoll. Mongan, however, had spoken truly and with certain secret knowledge, and felt sure of winning.

When the third day was almost expired and Forgoll had presented himself ready to claim the wager, there was heard coming in the distance the one whom Mongan awaited. It was Cailte himself, come from the Otherworld to bear testimony to the truthfulness of the king and to confound the audacious presumptions of the poet Forgoll. It was evening when he reached the palace. The king Mongan was seated on his throne, and the queen at his right full of fear about the outcome, and in front stood the poet Forgoll claiming the wager. No one knew the strange warrior as he entered the court, save the king.

Cailte, when fully informed of the quarrel and the wager, quickly announced so that all heard him distinctly, 'The poet has lied!' 'You will regret those words,' replied the poet. 'What you say does not well become you,' responded Cailte in turn, 'for I will prove what I say.' And straightway Cailte revealed this strange secret: that he had been one of the companions in arms under the great warrior Find, who was also his teacher, and that Mongan, the king before whom he spoke, was the reincarnation of Find:—

'We were with thee,' said Cailte, addressing the king. 'We were with Find.' 'Know, however,' replied Mongan, 'that you do wrong in revealing a secret.' But the warrior continued: 'We were therefore with Find. We came from Scotland. We encountered Fothad Airgdech near here, on the shores of the Ollarba. We gave him furious battle. I cast my spear at him in such a manner that it passed through his body, and the iron point, detaching itself from the staff, became fixed in the earth on the other side of Fothad. Behold here [in my hand] the shaft of that spear. There will be found the bare rock from the top of which I let fly my weapon. There will be found a little further to the east the iron point sunken in the earth. There will be found again a little further, always to the east, the tomb of Fothad Airgdech. A coffin of stone covers his body; his two bracelets of silver, his two arm-rings, and his neck-torque of silver are in the coffin. Above the tomb rises a pillar-stone, and on the upper extremity of that stone which is planted in the

earth one may read an inscription in ogam: *Here reposes Fothad Airgdech; he was fighting against Find when Cailte slew him.*'

And to the consternation of Forgoll, what this warrior who came from the Otherworld declared was true, for there were found the place indicated by him, the rock, the spear-head, the pillar-stone, the inscription, the coffin of stone, the body in it, and the jewellery. Thus Mongan gained the wager; and the secret of his life which he alone had known was revealed—he was Find re-born<sup>393</sup>; and Cailte, his old pupil and warrior-companion, had come from the land of the dead to aid him<sup>393</sup>:—‘It was Cailte, Find’s foster-son, that had come to them. Mongan, however, was Find, though he would not let it be told.’<sup>393</sup> But not only was Mongan an Irish king, he was also a god, the son of the Tuatha De Danann Manannan Mac Lir: ‘this Mongan is a son of Manannan Mac Lir, though he is called Mongan, son of Fiachna.’<sup>394</sup> And so it is that long after their conquest the People of the Goddess Dana ruled their conquerors, for they took upon themselves human bodies, being born as the children of the kings of Mil’s Sons.

There are other episodes which show very clearly the relationship between Mongan incarnated in a human body and his divine father Manannan. Thus, ‘When Mongan was three nights old, Manannan came for him and took him with him to bring up in the Land of Promise, and vowed that he would not let him back into Ireland before he were twelve years of age.’ And after Mongan has become Ulster’s high king, Manannan comes to him to rouse him out of human slothfulness to a consciousness of his divine nature and mission, and of the need of action: Mongan and his wife were frittering away their time playing a game, when they beheld a dark black-tufted little cleric standing at the door-post, who said:—“This inactivity in which thou art, O Mongan, is not an inactivity becoming a king of Ulster, not to go to avenge thy father on Fiachna the Black, son of Deman, though Dubh-Lacha may think it wrong to tell thee so....” Mongan seized the kingship of Ulster, and the little cleric who had done the reason was Manannan the great and mighty.’<sup>395</sup>

In the ancient tale of the *Voyage of Bran*—probably composed in its present form during the eighth, possibly the seventh, century A. D.—there

is another version of the Mongan Re-birth Story, which, being later in origin and composition than the *Voyage* itself, was undoubtedly clumsily inserted into the manuscript, as scholars think.<sup>396</sup> Therein, Mongan as the offspring of Manannan by the woman of Line-mag—quite after the theory of the Christian Incarnation—is described as ‘a fair man in a body of white clay’. This and what follows in the introductory quatrain show how early Celtic doctrines correspond to or else were originated by those of the Christians. And the transcriber seeing the parallels, glossed and altered the text which he copied by introducing Christian phraseology so as to fit it in with his own idea—altogether improbable—that the references are to the coming of Jesus Christ. The references are to Manannan and to the woman of Line-mag, who by him was to be the mother of Mongan—as Mary the wife of Joseph was the mother of Jesus Christ by God the Father:—

A noble salvation will come  
From the King who has created us,  
A white law will come over seas,  
Besides being God, He will be man.

This shape, he on whom thou lookest,  
Will come to thy parts;  
'Tis mine to journey to her house,  
To the woman in Line-mag.

For it is Moninnan, the son of Ler,  
From the chariot in the shape of a man,  
.....

He will delight the company of every fairy-knoll,  
He will be the darling of every goodly land,  
He will make known secrets—a course of wisdom—  
In the world, without being feared.

To him is attributed the power of shape-shifting, which is not transmigration into animal forms, but a magical power exercised by him in a human body.

He will be throughout long ages  
An hundred years in fair kingship

.....

Moninnan, the son of Ler  
Will be his father, his tutor.

At his death

The white host (the angels or fairies) will take him under a  
wheel (chariot) of clouds  
To the gathering where there is no sorrow.<sup>397</sup>

### **The Birth of Etain of the Tuatha De Danann<sup>398</sup>**

Another clear example of one of the Tuatha De Danann being born as a mortal is recorded in the famous saga of the *Wooing of Etain*. Three fragments of this story exist in the *Book of the Dun Cow*. The first tells how Etain Echraide, daughter of Ailill and wife of Midir (a great king among the *Sidhe* people) was driven out of Fairyland by the jealousy of her husband's other wife, and how after being wafted about on the winds of this world she fell invisibly into the drinking-cup of the wife of Etar of Inber Cichmaine, who was an Ulster chieftain. The chieftain's wife swallowed her; and, in due time, gave birth to a girl:—'It was one thousand and twelve years from the first begetting of Etain by Ailill to the last begetting by Etar.' Etain, retaining her own name, grew up thence as an Irish princess.<sup>399</sup>

One day an unknown man of very stately aspect suddenly appeared to Etain the princess; and as suddenly disappeared, after he had sung to her a

wonderful song designed to arouse in her the subconscious memories of her past existence among the *Sidhe*:—

So is Etain here to-day....  
Among little children is her lot....  
It is she was gulped in the drink  
By Etar's wife in a heavy draught.

The scribe ends this part of the story by letting it be known that Midir has struck off the head of his other wife, Fuamnach, the cause of all Etain's trouble.

The second section of the tale introduces Etain as queen of Eochaid Airem, high king of Ireland, and the most curious and important part of it shows how she was loved by Ailill Aenguba. Ailill, so far as blood kinship went, was the brother of Eochaid, though apparently either an incarnation of Midir or else possessed by him: Etain acceded to his love, but he was under a strange love-weakness; and on two occasions when he attempted to advance his desires an overpowering sleep fell on him, and each time Etain met a man in Ailill's shape—as though it were his 'double'—bemoaning his weakness. On a third occasion she asked who the man was, and he declared himself to be Midir, and besought her to return with him to the Otherworld. But her worldly or human memory clouded her subconscious memory, and she did not recognize Midir, yet promised to go with him on gaining Eochaid's permission. After this event, curiously enough, Ailill was healed of his strange love-malady.

In the third part of the story, Midir and Eochaid are playing games. Midir loses the first two and with them great riches, but winning the third claims the right to place his arms about Etain and kiss her. Eochaid asked a month's delay. The last day of the month had passed. It was night. Eochaid in his palace at Tara awaited the coming of his rival, Midir; and though all the doors of the palace had been firmly closed for the occasion, and armed soldiers surrounded the queen, Midir like a spirit suddenly stood in the centre of the court and claimed the wager. Then, grasping and kissing Etain,



he mounted in the air with her and very quickly passed out through the opening of the great chimney. In consternation, King Eochaid and his warriors hurried without the palace; and there, on looking up, they saw two white swans flying over Tara, bound together by a golden chain.<sup>400</sup>

### **The Pre-existence of Dermot**

With a difficult task before him, Dermot—as was the case with Mongan—is reminded of his pre-existence as a hero in the Otherworld with Manannan Mac Lir and Angus Oge:—‘Now spoke Fergus Truelips, Finn’s ollave, and said: “Cowardly and punily thou shrinkest, Dermot; for with most potent Manannan, son of Lir, thou studiedst and wast brought up, in the Land of Promise and in the bay-indented coasts; with Angus Oge, too, the Daghdha’s son, wast most accurately taught; and it is not just that now thou lackest even a moderate portion of their skill and daring, such as might serve to convey Finn and his party up this rock or bastion.” At these words Dermot’s face grew red; he laid hold on Manannan’s magic staves that he had, and, as once again he redly blushed, by dint of skill in martial feats he with a leap rose on his javelin’s shafts and so gained his two soles’ breadth of the solid glebe that overhung the water’s edge.’<sup>401</sup>

### **Re-birth of Tuan**

Tuan, as the son of Starn, lived one hundred years as the brother of Partholon, the first man to reach Ireland; and then, after two hundred and twenty years, was re-born as the son of Cairell. This story in its oldest form is preserved in the *Book of the Dun Cow*, and seems to have been composed during the late ninth or early tenth century.<sup>402</sup>

### **Re-birth among the Brythons**

Such then are the re-birth stories of the Gaels. Among the Brythons the same ancient doctrine prevailed, though we have fewer clear records of it. Of the Brythonic Re-birth Doctrine as philosophically expounded in *Barddas*, mention has already been made.

In the ancient Welsh story about Taliessin, Gwion after many transformations, magical in their nature, is re-born as that great poet of Wales, his mother being a goddess, Caridwen, who dwells beneath the waters of Lake Tegid. In its present mystical form this tale cannot be traced further than the end of the sixteenth century, though the transformation incidents are presupposed in the *Book of Taliessin*, a thirteenth-century manuscript.<sup>403</sup> Besides being the re-birth of Gwion, Taliessin may be regarded as a bardic initiate high in degree, who is possessed of all magical and druidical powers.<sup>403</sup> He made a voyage to the Otherworld, *Caer Sidi*; and this seems to indicate some close connexion between ancient rites of initiation and his occult knowledge of all things.<sup>404</sup> Like the Irish re-birth and Otherworld tales, it also suggests the relation between the world of death or Faerie and the world of human embodiment.

From his harrying of Hades, the Brythonic Gwydion secured the Head of Hades' Cauldron of Regeneration or Re-birth; and when corpses of slain warriors are thrown into it they arise next day as excellent as ever, except that they are unable to speak; which circumstance may be equal to saying that the ordinary uninitiated man when re-born is unable to speak of his previous incarnation, because he has no memory of it. This Cauldron of Re-birth, like so many objects mentioned in the ancient bardic literature, is evidently a mystic symbol: it suggests the same correspondences, as propounded in the modern *Barddas*, between the dead and the living, between death and re-birth; and Gwydion having been a great culture hero of Wales probably promulgated a doctrine of re-birth, and hence is described as being able to resuscitate the dead.<sup>405</sup>

### **King Arthur as a Reincarnated Hero**

Judging from substantial evidence set forth above in chapter v, the most famous of all Welsh heroes, Arthur, equally with Cuchulainn his Irish counterpart, can safely be considered both as a god apart from the human plane of existence, and thus like the Tuatha De Danann or Fairy-Folk, and also like a great national hero and king (such as Mongan was) incarnated in a physical body. The taking of Arthur to Avalon by his life-guardian, the Lady of the Lake, and by his own sister, and by two other fairy women who live in that Otherworld of Sacred Apple-Groves, is sufficient in itself, we believe, to prove him of a descent more divine than that of ordinary men. And the belief in his return from that Otherworld—a return so confidently looked for by the Brythonic peoples—seems to be a belief (whether recognized as such or not) that the Great Hero will be reincarnated as a Messiah destined to set them free. In Avalon, Arthur lives now, and ‘It is from there that the Britons of England and of France have for a long time awaited his coming’.<sup>406</sup> And Malory expressing the sentiment in his age writes<sup>407</sup>:—‘Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life.’ If we consider Arthur’s passing and expected return, as many do, in a purely mythological aspect, we must think of him for the time as a sun-god, and yet even then cannot escape altogether from the re-birth idea; for, as a study of ancient Egyptian mythology shows, there is still the same set of relations.<sup>408</sup> There are the sun-symbols always made use of to set forth the doctrine of re-birth, be it Egyptian, Indian, Mexican, or Celtic:—the death of a mortal like the passing of Arthur is represented by the sun-set on the horizon between the visible world here and the invisible world beyond the Western Ocean, and the re-birth is the sunrise of a new day.

### **Non-Celtic Parallels**

As a non-Celtic parallel to what has preceded concerning the Otherworld of the Celts and their Doctrine of Re-birth, we offer the second of the *Stories of the High-priests of Memphis*, as published by Mr. F. L. Griffith from ancient manuscripts.<sup>409</sup> It is a history of Si-Osiri (the son of Osiris), whose father was Setme Khamuas. This wonderful divine son when still a child took his human father on a journey to see Amenti, the Otherworld of the Dead; and when twelve years of age he was wiser than the wisest of the scribes and unequalled in magic. At this period in his life there arrived in Egypt an Ethiopian magician who came with the object of humbling the kingdom; but Si-Osiri read what was in the unopened letter of the stranger, and knew that its bearer was the reincarnation of 'Hor the son of the Negress', the most formidable of the three Ethiopian magicians who fifteen hundred years before had waged war with the magicians of Egypt. At that time the Egyptian Hor, the son of Pa-neshe, had defeated the great magician of Ethiopia in the final struggle between White and Black Magic which took place in the presence of the Pharaoh.<sup>410</sup> And 'Hor the son of the Negress' had agreed not to return to Egypt again for fifteen hundred years. But now the time was elapsed, and, unmasking the character of the messenger, Si-Osiri destroyed him with magical fire. After this, Si-Osiri revealed himself as the reincarnation of Hor the son of Pa-neshe, and declared that Osiris had permitted him to return to earth to destroy the powerful hereditary enemy of Egypt. When the revelation was made, Si-Osiri 'passed away as a shade', going back again, even as the Celtic Arthur, into the realm invisible from which he came.

As in ancient Ireland, where many kings or great heroes were regarded as direct incarnations or reincarnations of gods or divine beings from the Otherworld, so in Egypt the Pharaohs were thought to be gods in human bodies, sent by Osiris to rule the Children of the Sun.<sup>411</sup> In Mexico and Peru there was a similar belief.<sup>412</sup> In the Indian *Mahâbhârata*, Râma and Krishna are at once gods and men.<sup>413</sup> The celebrated philosophical poem known as the *Bhagavadgîtâ* also asserts Krishna's descent from the gods; and the same view is again enforced and extended in the *Hari-vansa* and especially in the *Bhâgavata Purâna*.<sup>413</sup> The Indian *Laws of Manu* say that

‘even an infant king must not be despised from an idea that he is a mere mortal; for he is a great deity in human form’.<sup>414</sup> In ancient Greece it was a common opinion that Zeus was reincarnated from age to age in the great national heroes. ‘Alexander the Great was regarded not merely as the son of Zeus, but as Zeus himself.’ And other great Greeks were regarded as gods while living on earth, like Lycurgus the Spartan law-giver, who after his death was worshipped as one of the divine ones.<sup>415</sup>

Among the great philosophers, the ancient doctrine of re-birth was a personal conviction: Buddha related very many of his previous reincarnations, according to the *Gâtakamâlâ*; Pythagoras is said to have gone to the temple of Here and recognized there an ancient shield which he had carried in a previous life when he was Euphorbus, a Homeric hero.<sup>416</sup> From what Plato, in his *Meno*, quoted from an old poet, it seems very probable that there may be some sort of relationship between legends mentioning the Rites of Proserpine, like the legend of Aeneas in Virgil, and certain of the Irish Otherworld and Re-birth legends among the Gaels, as we have already suggested:—‘For from whomsoever Persephone hath accepted the atonement of ancient woe, their souls she sendeth up once more to the upper sun in the ninth year. From these grow up glorious kings and men of swift strength, and men surpassing in poetical skill; and for all future time they are called holy heroes among men.’ Among modern philosophers and poets in Europe and America the same ideas find their echo: Wordsworth in his *Ode to Immortality* definitely inculcates pre-existence; Emerson in his *Threnody*, and Tennyson in his *De Profundis*, seem committed to the re-birth doctrine, and Walt Whitman in his *Leaves of Grass* without doubt accepted it as true. Certain German philosophers, too, appear to hold views in harmony with what is also the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth, e.g. Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Idea*, J. G. Fichte, in *The Destiny of Man*, and Herder, in *Dialogues on Metempsychosis*. The Emperor of Japan is still the Divine Child of the Sun, the head of the *Order of the Rising Sun*, and is always regarded by his subjects as the incarnation of a great being. The Great Lama of Thibet is believed to reincarnate immediately after death.<sup>417</sup> William II of Germany seems to echo, perhaps

unconsciously, the same doctrine when he claims to be ruling by divine right.<sup>418</sup>

That the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth is a direct and complete confirmation of the Psychological Theory of the nature and origin of the belief in fairies is self-evident. Could it be shown to be scientifically plausible in itself, as well-educated Celts consider it to be—and much evidence to be derived from a study of states of consciousness, e.g. dreams, somnambulism, trance, crystal-gazing, changed personality, subconsciousness, and so forth, indicates that it might be shown to be so—it would effectively prove the theory. Fairies would then be beings of the Otherworld who can enter the human plane of life by submitting to the natural process of birth in a physical body, and would correspond to the *Alcheringa* ancestors of the Arunta. In chapter xii following, such a proof of the theory is attempted.

## **Re-birth Among Modern Celts**

One of the chief objects of this chapter is to show that the Re-birth Doctrine of the Celts, like most beliefs bound up with the Fairy-Faith, still survives; thus further proving that Celtic tradition is an unbroken thing from times prehistoric until to-day. We shall therefore proceed to bring forward the following original material, collected by ourselves, as evidence on this point:—

### **In Ireland**

In Ireland I found two districts where the Re-birth Doctrine has not been wholly forgotten. The first one is in the country round Knock Ma, near Tuam. After Mrs. —— had told me about fairies, I led up to the subject of re-birth, and the most valuable of all my Irish finds concerning the belief was the result. For this woman of Belclare told me that it was believed by

many of the old people, when she was a girl living a few miles west of Knock Ma, that they had lived on this earth before as men and women; but, she added, ‘You could hardly get them to talk about their belief. It was a sort of secret which they who held it discussed freely only among themselves.’ They believed, too, that disease and misfortune in old age come as a penalty for sins committed in a former life.<sup>419</sup> This expiatory or purgatorial aspect of the Re-birth Doctrine seems to have been more widespread than the doctrine in its bare outlines; for the Belclare woman in speaking of it was able to recall from memories of forty-five or fifty years ago what was then a popular story about a disease-worn man and an eel-fisherman:—

The diseased man as he watches the eel-fisherman taking up his baskets, contrasts his own wretched physical condition with the vigour and good health of the latter, and attributes the misfortune which is upon himself to bad actions in a life prior to the one he is then living. And here is the unhappy man’s lamentation:—

Fliuch, fuar atâ mo leabaidh;  
Atâ fearthâinn agus geur-ghaoith;  
Atâim ag îoc na h-uaille,  
A’s tusa ag faire do chliaibhîn.

(Wet, cold is my bed;  
There is rain and sharp wind;  
I am paying for pride,  
And you watching your [eel-]basket.)

The teller of the story insisted on giving me these verses in Irish, for she said they have much less meaning in English, and I took them down; and to verify them and the story in which they find a place, I went to the cottage a second time. There is no doubt, therefore, that the legend is a genuine echo of the religion of pre-Christian Ireland, in which reincarnation appears to have been clearly inculcated and was probably the common belief.

I once asked Steven Ruan, the Galway piper, if he had ever heard of such a thing as people being born more than once here on this earth, seeing that I was seeking for traces of the old Irish Doctrine of Re-birth. The answer he gave me was this:—‘I have often heard it said that people born and dead come into this world again. I have heard the old people say that we have lived on this earth before; and I have often met old men and women who believed they had lived before. The idea passed from one old person to another, and was a common belief, though you do not hear much about it now.’

A highly educated Irishman now living in California tells me of his own knowledge that there was a popular and sincere belief among many of the Irish people throughout Ireland that Charles Parnell, their great champion in modern times, was the reincarnation of one of the old Gaelic heroes. This shows how the ancient doctrine is still practically applied. There is also an opinion held by certain very prominent Irishmen now living in Ireland, with whom I have been privileged to discuss the re-birth doctrine, that both Patrick and Columba are likewise to be regarded as ancient Gaelic heroes, who were reincarnated to work for the uplifting of the Gael.<sup>420</sup>

A legend concerning Lough Gur, County Limerick, indicates that the sleeping-hero type of tale is a curious aspect of an ancient re-birth doctrine. In such tales, heroes and their warrior companions are held under enchantment, awaiting the mystic hour to strike for them to issue forth and free their native land from the rule of the Saxon. Usually they are so held within a mysterious cavern, as is the case of Arthur and his men, according to differently localized Welsh stories; or they are in the depths of magic hills and mountains like most Irish heroes. The heroes under enchantment with their companions are to be considered as resident in the Otherworld, and their return to human action as a return to the human plane of life. The Lough Gur legend is about Garret Fitzgerald, the Earl of Desmond, who rebelled against Queen Elizabeth. Modern folk-tradition regards him as the guardian deity of the Lough, and as dwelling in an enchanted palace situated beneath its waters. As Count John de Salis, whose ancestral home is the Lough Gur estate, assures me, the peasants of the region declare



themselves convinced that the earl once in seven years appears riding across the lake surface on a phantom white horse shod with shoes of silver; and they believe that when the horse's silver shoes are worn out the enchantment will end. Then, like Arthur when his stay in Avalon ends, Garret Fitzgerald will return to the world of human life again to lead the Irish hosts to victory.<sup>421</sup>

## **In Scotland**

Dr. Alexander Carmichael, author of *Carmina Gadelica*, who as a folklorist has examined modern peasant beliefs throughout the Highlands and Islands more thoroughly than any other living Scotsman, informs me that apparently there was at one time in the Highlands a definite belief in the ancient Celtic Re-birth Doctrine, because he has found traces of it there, though these traces were only in the vaguest and barest outline.

## **In the Isle of Man**

Mr. William Cashen, keeper of Peel Castle, reported as follows with respect to a re-birth doctrine in the Isle of Man:—‘Here in the Island among old Manx people I have heard it said, but only in a joking way, that we will come back to this earth again after some thousands of years. The idea wasn't very popular nor often discussed, and there is no belief in it now to my knowledge. It seems to have come down from the Druids.’

This is Mr. William Oates' testimony, given at Ballasalla:—‘Some held a belief in the coming back (re-birth) of spirits. I can't explain it. A certain Manxman I knew used to talk about the transmigration of spirits; but I shall not give his name, since many of his family still live here on the Island.’

Mr. Thomas Kelley, of Glen Meay, had no clear idea about the ancient Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth, though he said:—‘My grandfather had a notion that he would be back here again at the Resurrection to claim his land.’ This

undoubtedly shows how the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection and the Celtic one of Re-birth may have blended, both being based on the common idea of a physical post-existence.

## **In Wales**

In the Pentre Evan country where I discovered such rich folk-lore, I found my chief witness from there not unfamiliar with the ancient Celtic belief in Re-birth. One day I asked her if she had ever heard the old folk say that they had lived before on this earth as men and women. Somewhat surprised at the question, for to answer it would reveal half-secret thoughts of which, as it proved, not even her own nephew or niece had knowledge, she hesitated a moment, and, then, looking at me intently, said with great earnestness, ‘Yes; and I often believe myself that I have lived before.’ And because of the unusual question, which seemed to reveal on my part familiarity with the belief, she added, ‘And I think you must be of the same opinion as to yourself.’ She explained then that the belief was a rare one now, and held by only a few of the oldest of her old acquaintances in that region, and they seldom talk about it to their children for fear of being laughed at.

Mr. J. Ceredig Davies, the well-known folk-lorist of Llanilar, near Aberystwyth, speaking of the Welsh Re-birth Doctrine, said he remembers, while in Patagonia, having discussed Druidism with a friend there, the late John Jones, originally of Bala, North Wales, and hearing him remark, ‘Indeed, I have a half-belief that I have been in this world before.’

Mr. Jones, our witness from Pontrhydfendigaid, offers testimony of the highest value concerning Druidism and the doctrine of re-birth in Central Wales, as follows:—‘Taliessin believed in re-birth, and he was the first to interpret the Druidic laws. He believed that from age to age he had been in many human bodies. He believed that he possessed the same soul as Enoch and Eli, that he had been a judge sitting on the case of Jesus Christ—“I was a judge at the Crucifixion,” he is reported as saying—and that he had been a

prisoner in bonds at the Court of Cynfelyn, not far from Aberystwyth, for a year and a day. Two hundred years ago, belief in re-birth was common. Many still held it when I was a boy. And even yet here in this region some people are imbued with the ancient faith of the Druids, and firmly believe that the spirit migrates from one body to another. It is said, too, that a pregnant woman is able to determine what kind of a child she will give birth to.<sup>422</sup>

Mr. Jones's use of the phrase 'migrate from one body to another' led us to suspect that it might refer to transmigration, i.e. re-birth into animal bodies, which Dr. Tylor in *Primitive Culture*<sup>4</sup> (ii. 6–11, 17, &c.) shows is a distorted or corrupted interpretation of what he calls the reasonable and straightforward doctrine of re-birth into human bodies only. But when we questioned Mr. Jones further about the matter he said:—'The belief I refer to is re-birth into human bodies. I have heard of witches being able to change their own body into the body of an animal or demon, but I never heard of men transmigrating into the bodies of animals. Some people have said that the Druids taught transmigration of this sort, but I do not think they did—though Welsh poets seem to have made use of such a doctrine for the sake of poetry.'

In order to gain evidence concerning the Re-birth Doctrine as concrete as possible from so important a witness as Mr. Jones, we asked him further if he could recall the names of one or two of his old acquaintances who believed in it; and he said:—'One old character named Thomas Williams, a dyer by trade, nearly believed in it, and Shôn Evan Rolant firmly believed in it. Rolant was the owner of Old Abbey Farm on the Cross-Wood Estate, and originally was a well-to-do and respectable farmer, but in consequence of mortgages on the estate he lost his property. After being dispossessed and badly treated, he used to recite the one hundred and ninth Psalm, to bring curses upon those who worked against him in the dispossession process; and it was thought that he succeeded in bringing curses upon them.'

The Rev. T. M. Morgan, Vicar of Newchurch parish, near Carmarthen, who has already offered valuable evidence concerning the *Tylwyth Teg* (see pp. 149–51), contributes additional material about the Doctrine of Re-birth

in South Wales:—‘My father said there used to be expressed in Cardiganshire before his time, a belief in re-birth. This was in accord with Druidism, namely, that all human beings formerly existed on the moon, the world of middle light, and the queen of heaven; that those who there lived a righteous life were thence born on the sun, and thence onward to the highest heaven; and that those whose moon life had been unrighteous were born on this earth of suffering and sin. Through right-living on earth souls are able to return to the moon, and then evolve to the sun and highest heaven; or, through wrong living on earth, souls are born in the third condition, which is one of utter darkness and of still greater suffering and sin than our world offers. But even from this lowest condition souls can work upwards to the highest glory if they strive successfully against evil. The Goddess of Heaven or Mother of all human beings was known as *Brenhines-y-nef*. I am unable to tell if she is the moon itself or lived in the moon. On the other hand, the sun was considered the father of all human beings. According to the old belief, every new moon brings the souls who were unfit to be born on the sun, to deposit them here on our earth. Sometimes there are more souls seeking embodiment on earth than there are infant bodies to contain them. Hence souls fight among themselves to occupy a body. Occasionally one soul tries to drive out from a body the soul already in possession of it, in order to possess it for itself. In consequence of such struggling of soul against soul, men in this world manifest madness and tear themselves. Whenever such a condition showed itself, the person exhibiting it was called a *Lloerig* or “one who is moon-torn”—*Lloer* meaning moon, and *rhigo* to notch or tear; and in the English word *lunatic*, meaning “moon-struck”, we have a similar idea.’<sup>423</sup>

Mr. David Williams, J.P., of Carmarthen, who has already told us much about Welsh fairies (see pp. 151–3), offers equally valuable information about the ‘Three Circles of Existence’ and the Druidic scheme of soul-evolution, as follows:—‘According to the Druids, there are three Circles through which souls must pass. The first is *Cylch y Ceugant*, the second *Cylch Abred*, the third *Cylch y Gwynfyd*. The name of each circle refers to a special kind of spiritual training, and if in reaching the second circle you do

not gain its perfection by completing all its provisions [probably in due order and time], you must begin again in Circle One; but if you reach the perfection of Circle Two you go on to Circle Three. In Circle One, which is unlocated, the soul has no condition of bodily existence as in Circle Two. The second Circle appears to be a state something like the one we are in now—a mixture of good and evil. The third Circle is a state of perfection and blessedness. In it the soul's environments correspond to all its wishes and desires, and there is contact with God.' At this point I asked if there was loss of individuality in Circle Three, and Mr. Williams replied:—'No, there is not loss of individuality.' Hence, as we suggest, *Cylch y Gwynfyd* is the Druidic parallel to the Nirvana of Indian metaphysics—being like it, a state of perfect and unlimited self-consciousness which man never knows in earth-life. And, finally, Mr. Williams said in relation to re-birth:—'About the years 1780–1820 there lived an old bard in Glamorganshire who was actually a Druid, though he professed to be a Christian as well, and he believed fully in re-birth. His common name was Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg); and he [with Owen Jones and William O. Pughe] edited the famous *Archaiology of Wales*.'

### **In Cornwall**

Mr. Henry Maddern, F.I.A.S., our very important witness from Penzance, testifies as follows concerning a re-birth doctrine in Cornwall:—'Belief in reincarnation was very common among the old Cornish peoples. For example, it was believed when an incantation had been pronounced in the proper way at the Newlyn Tolcarne, that the Troll who inhabited it could embody the person who called him up in any state in which that person had existed during a former age. You had only to name the age or period, and you could live your past life therein over again. My nurse, Betty Grancan, and an old miner named William Edwards, both believed in re-birth, and told me about it. I have heard them relate stories to one another to the effect that a person can go back into the memory of past

lives. They said that the sex always remains the same from life to life. I have never heard of any belief in transmigration of humans into animals, but in human re-birth only.’<sup>424</sup>

## **In Brittany**

In chapter ii, p. 216, M. Z. Le Rouzic, keeper of the Miln Museum at Carnac, says that there is now among his Breton countrymen round Carnac a general and profound belief that spirits incarnate as men and women; and he has told me that this belief exists also in other regions of the Morbihan. And I myself found there in this Carnac country of which M. Le Rouzic speaks, that the doctrine of the reincarnation of ancestors, which, as he agrees, is the same thing as the incarnation of spirits, is quite common, though as a rule only talked about among the Bretons themselves.

M. Le Rouzic restated the belief as he knows it round Carnac, as follows:—‘It is incontestable that the belief in the reincarnation of spirits is general in our country; and it is believed that the spirits embodied now are the spirits of the people of former times.’

After Louis Guézel, of the village of St. Columban, a mile from Carnac, had related to me certain legends of the dead, I asked him if he had ever heard that the dead may be born again as men and women here on this earth. Contrary to my expectations, the question caused no surprise whatever; and I was at once given the impression that the ancient Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth is a thoroughly familiar one to him and to many Bretons about the Carnac district. As we conversed about the doctrine, he said emphatically, ‘*C’est la vérité*’ (It is the truth); and in illustration told the following anecdotes:—‘A woman in a cemetery one evening saw the spirits of many dead children begging of her life, and reincarnation. A son of my son resembles my grandfather, especially in his mental traits and general character, and the family believe that this son is my grandfather reincarnated.’ (Recorded at St. Columban, Brittany, August 1909.)

Professor Anatole Le Braz, in a letter-preface to *Carnac, Légendes, Traditions, Coutumes et Contes du Pays* (Nantes, 1909), by M. Z. Le Rouzic, makes this poetical reference to his friend, its author, and thereby admirably echoes the ancient Breton Doctrine of Re-birth:—‘You, your eyes, your ears are elsewhere: you are a seer and a hearer of the lower regions; you perceive the floating images and you discern the hollow sounds of the people of the manes; you live, literally, among them. What am I saying? Under the form and appearance of a man of to-day, you are in reality one of them, ascended to the day and reincarnated.’ Again, speaking of the Alignements of Menec, Professor Le Braz adds concerning his friend:—‘You have been one of the priest-builders who worked at its erection; you have officiated among its myriads of columns, presided amid the pomp of great funerals in its cyclopean caverns, sprinkled its sepulchral mounds, shaped like tents, with the blood of oxen and of heifers now dear to St. Cornely. And this also you confess to me yourself: these unfathomable epochs remain for you actual and present.’

## **Origin and Evolution of the Celtic Doctrine Of Re-birth**

In considering briefly what non-Celtic doctrines could conceivably have shaped the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth, two chief streams of influence are open to examination. One stream has its source in re-birth doctrines like those set forth by Orphic, Pythagorean, Platonic, and similar orientally-derived philosophies; while the other arises out of primitive Christianity, wherein, as literary and historical evidence suggests, re-birth may have been an equally important doctrine; or, at all events, there was a decided tendency, later condemned as heretical, to synthesize the Alexandrian philosophy and the Jewish (which to some extent influenced the Alexandrian) with early Church doctrines. This tendency is clearly shown by Origen, and by Clemens Alexandrinus, another eminent Father.

We have a better check on the second stream than on the first, because Christianity has a later and more definite origin than any of the orientally-

derived philosophies. Some of the Druids, chiefly of Scotland and Wales, who are known to have held the re-birth doctrine before conversion, and probably after conversion, as was the case with a modern Druid, an editor of the *Archaiology of Wales* (see p. 391, above), accepted the New Faith as a purer form of Druidism and Jesus Christ as the Greatest of Druids. This ready and full acceptance would most likely not have been possible had their cardinal re-birth doctrine been thereby condemned. It would seem, therefore, that a primitive Christian re-birth doctrine may have been openly held by certain of the early Celtic missionaries. These latter, during the centuries when Ireland was the university for all Europe, had good opportunities for knowing much about the earliest traditions of Christianity, and they, with their own half-pagan instincts, would have given approval to such a doctrine without consulting Rome, just as Church Fathers like Tertullian condemned it on their own personal authority and Origen believed it. Further, if we hold in mind that the doctrine of the Incarnation even now inculcates that the Son pre-existed and united Himself with a human soul in the act of conception, and that it may originally and by some Irish saints have been thought of as applying to all mankind in a more humble and less divine way, we seem to see in the Mongan re-birth story, which Christian transcribers have glossed, evidently with such ideas in mind, a proof that on this doctrinal point Christian and Celtic beliefs coalesced.<sup>425</sup> But the Christian beliefs did not originate the Celtic, for scholars have shown that the germ of the Mongan re-birth story, as well as that of the Cuchulainn re-birth episode, is pre-Christian, and that the Etain birth-story dates from a time when Irish myth and history were entirely free from Christian influence.<sup>426</sup> The same original pagan character is shown in the re-birth episodes existing in Brythonic literature.<sup>427</sup> And, finally, from the testimony of several ancient authorities, e.g. Julius Caesar, Diodorus Siculus, Pomponius Mela, and Lucan, who wrote, respectively, about 50 BC, 40 BC, A. D. 44, and A. D. 60 to 65, that the Celts already held the re-birth doctrine, it is certain that any possible influence from the Christian stream instead of originating the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth could merely have modified it.



The question remaining, Would the classical or oriental doctrines of re-birth have originated or fundamentally shaped the Celtic re-birth doctrine? is a very difficult one. At present it cannot be answered with certainty either negatively or positively. We may suppose, however, as we did in the case of the parallel Christian re-birth doctrine, a possible contact and amalgamation, brought about in various ways, e.g. through Oriental merchants like the Phoenicians, and travellers who visited Britain in pre-Christian times, but chiefly through the continental Celts, who had direct knowledge of Greek and Roman culture, meeting their insular brethren beyond the Channel and Irish Sea. All such ancient contacts push the problem further and further back in time; and our easiest and safest course is to state—as we may of the similar problem of the origin of the Celtic Otherworld belief—that available facts of comparative religion, philosophy, and myth, indicate clearly a prehistoric epoch when there was a common ancestral stock for the Mediterranean and pan-Celtic cultures. This may have had its beginnings in the Danube country, or in North Europe, as many authorities in ethnology now hold, or, as others are beginning to hold, in the lost Atlantis—the most probable home of the dark pre-Celtic peoples of Ireland, Isle of Man, Scotland, Britain, Southern and Western Europe, and North Africa, who with the Aryans are the joint ancestors of the modern Celts. Both branches of this common Celtic ancestral stock held the re-birth doctrine. And at least from their Aryan ancestors it seems to have been inherited by the Celts of history. To attempt a hypothetical proof that this race or that race, Egyptian, Phoenician, Greek, or Celtic, as the case may be, is alone the originator of this or any other particular belief is as useless and as absurd as to attempt proof that the Gael has no racial affinity with the Brython. One of the greatest services now being performed by scientific inquiry into human problems is the demonstration of the unreasonableness of assuming artificial social barriers separating race from race, religion from religion, and institution from institution, and the declaration that the unity and the brotherhood of man is a fact inherent in man's own nature, and not a sentimental ideal. But there is specialization and differentiation everywhere in nature; and while Celtic traditions and beliefs are not

fundamentally unlike those found in every age, race, and cultural stage, the treatment of this common stock of prehistoric lore and mystical religion is in some respects unique, and hence Celtic. Beyond this statement we cannot go.

## **Section III**

# **The Cult of Gods, Spirits, Fairies, and the Dead**

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## **Chapter VIII**

# **The Testimony of Archaeology<sup>428</sup>**

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‘As he spoke, he paused before a great mound grown over with trees, and around it silver clear in the moonlight were immense stones piled, the remains of an original circle, and there was a dark, low, narrow entrance leading therein. “This was my palace. In days past many a one plucked here the purple flower of magic and the fruit of the tree of life....” And even as he spoke, a light began to glow and to pervade the cave, and to obliterate the stone walls and the antique hieroglyphics engraven thereon, and to melt the earthen floor into itself like a fiery sun suddenly uprisen within the world, and there was everywhere a wandering ecstasy of sound: light and sound were one; light had a voice, and the music hung glittering in the air.... “I am Aengus; men call me the Young. I am the sunlight in the heart, the moonlight in the mind; I am the light at the end of every dream, the voice for ever calling to come away; I am desire beyond joy or tears. Come with me, come with me: I will make you immortal; for my palace opens into the Gardens of the Sun, and there are the fire-fountains which quench the heart’s desire in rapture.”’—A. E.

Inadequacy of Pygmy Theory—According to the theories concerning divine images and fetishes, gods, daemons, and ancestral spirits haunt megaliths—Megaliths are religious and funereal, as shown chiefly by *Cenn Cruaich*, Stonehenge, Guernsey menhirs, monuments in Brittany, by the circular fairy dance as an ancient initiatory sun-dance, by Breton earthworks, archaeological excavations generally, and by present-day worship at Indian dolmens—New Grange and Celtic Mysteries: evidence of manuscripts; evidence of tradition—The Aengus Cult—New Grange compared with Great Pyramid: both have astronomical arrangement and same internal plan—Why they open to the sunrise—Initiations in both—Great Pyramid as model for Celtic tumuli—Gavrinis and New Grange as spirit-temples.

In this chapter we propose to deal with the popular belief among Celtic peoples that tumuli, dolmens, menhirs, and in fact most megalithic monuments, prehistoric or historic, are either the abodes or else the favourite haunts of various orders of fairies—of pixies in Cornwall, of *corrigans* in Brittany, of little spirits like pygmies, of spirits like mortals in stature, of goblins, of demons, and of ghosts. Interesting attempts have been made to explain this folk-belief by means of the Pygmy Theory of Fairies; and this folk-belief appears to be almost the chief one upon which the theory depends.<sup>429</sup> As was pointed out in the Introduction (p. xxiii), possibly one of the many threads interwoven into the complex fabric of the Fairy-Faith round an original psychical pattern may have been bequeathed by a folk-memory of some unknown, perhaps pygmy, races, who may have inhabited underground places like those in certain tumuli. But even though the Pygmy Theory were altogether accepted by us the problem we are to consider would still be an unsolved one; for how explain by the Pygmy Theory why the folk-memory should always run in psychical channels, and not alone in Celtic lands, but throughout Europe, and even in Australia, America, Africa, and India.

Archaeological researches have now made it clear that many of the great tumuli covering dolmens or subterranean chambers, like that of Mont St. Michel (at Carnac) for example, were religious and funereal in their purposes from the first; and therefore the Pygmy Theory is far from a satisfactory or adequate explanation. To us the inquiry is similar to an investigation into the reasons why ghosts should haunt a house, whereas the supporters of the Pygmy Theory forget the ghosts and tell all about the people who may or who may never have lived in the haunted house, and who built it. The megaliths, in the plain language of the folk-belief, are haunted by fairies, pixies, *corrigans*, ghosts, and various sorts of invisible beings. Like the Psychical Research Society, we believe there may be, or actually are, invisible beings like ghosts, and so propose to conduct our investigations from that point of view.<sup>430</sup>

### **Menhirs, Dolmens, Cromlechs, and Tumuli**

To begin with, we shall concern ourselves with menhirs, dolmens, cromlechs, and certain kinds of tumuli—such as are found at Carnac, round which *corrigans* hold their nightly revels, and where ghost-like forms are sometimes seen in the moonlight, or even when there is no moon. M. Paul Sébillot in *Le Folk-lore de France*<sup>431</sup> has very adequately described the numerous folk-traditions and customs connected with all such monuments, and it remains for us to deal especially with the psychical aspects of these traditions and customs.

The learned Canon Mahé in his *Essai sur les antiquités du département du Morbihan* (p. 258), a work of rare merit, published at Vannes in 1825, holds that not only were the majestic Alignements of Carnac used as temples for religious rites, but that the stones themselves of which the Alignements are formed were venerated as the abodes of gods.<sup>432</sup> And quoting Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, Hermes, and others, he shows that the ancients believed that gods and daemons, attracted by sacrifice and worship to stone images and other inanimate objects, overshadowed them

or even took up their abode in them. This position of Canon Mahé is confirmed by a comparative study of Celtic and non-Celtic traditions respecting the theory of what has been erroneously called ‘idol-worship’. All evidence goes to show that idols so called, are simply images used as media for the manifestation of ghosts, spirits, and gods: the ancients, like contemporary primitive races, do not seem ever to have actually worshipped such images, but simply to have supplicated by prayer and sacrifice the indwelling deity.<sup>433</sup> The ancient Egyptians, for example, conceived the *Ka* or personality as a thing separable from the person or body, and hence ‘the statue of a human being represented and embodied a human *Ka*’. Likewise a statue of a god was the dwelling-place of a divine *Ka*, attracted to it by certain mystical formulae at the time of dedication.<sup>434</sup> Though there might be many statues of the same god no two were alike; each was animated by an independent ‘double’ which the rites of consecration had elicited from the god. These statues, being thus animated by a ‘double’, manifested their will—as Greek and Roman statues are reported to have done—either by speaking, or by rhythmic movements. The divine virtue residing in the images of the gods was thought to be a sort of fluid, analogous to what we call the magnetic fluid, the aura, &c. It could be transmitted by the imposition of hands and by magic passes, on the nape of the neck or along the dorsal spine of a patient;<sup>435</sup> and no doubt extraordinary curative properties were attributed to it.

Dr. Tylor has brought together examples from all parts of the globe of so-called fetishism, which is veneration paid to natural living objects such as trees, fish, animals, as well as to inanimate objects of almost every conceivable description, including stones, because of the spirit believed to be inherent or resident in the particular object; and he shows that idols originally were fetishes, which in time came to be shaped according to the form of the spirit or god supposed to possess them.<sup>436</sup> Mr. R. R. Marett, the originator of the pre-animistic theory, believes that originally fetishes were regarded as gods themselves, and that gradually they came to be regarded as the dwellings of gods.<sup>437</sup> Certain well-defined Celtic traditions entirely fit in with this theory:—e.g. Canon Mahé writes, ‘In accordance with this

strange theory they (the Celts) could believe that rocks, set in motion by spirits which animated them, sometimes went to drink at rivers, as is said of the Peulvan at Noyal-Pontivy' (Morbihan);<sup>438</sup> and I have found a parallel belief at Rollright, Oxfordshire, England, where it is said of the King Stone, an ancient menhir, and, according to some folk-traditions, a human being transformed, that it goes down the hill on Christmas Eve to drink at the river. In the famous menhir or pillar-stone on Tara to this day, we have another curious example like the moving statues in Egypt and the Celtic stones which move; for in the *Book of Lismore* the wonderful properties of the *Lia Fáil*, the 'Stone of Destiny', are enumerated, and it is said that ever when Ireland's monarch stepped upon it the stone would cry out under him, but that if any other person stepped upon it, there was only silence.<sup>439</sup>

In the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick* it is said that Ireland's chief idol was at Mag Slecht, and by name 'Cenn Cruaich, covered with gold and silver, and twelve other idols<sup>440</sup> [were] about it, covered with brass'. When Patrick tried to place his crosier on the top of Cenn Cruaich, the idol 'bowed westward to turn on its right side, for its face was from the South, to wit, Tara.... And the earth swallowed the twelve other images as far as their heads, and they are thus in sign of the miracle, and he cursed the demon, and banished him to hell'.<sup>441</sup> Sir John Rhys points out that *Cenn Cruaich* means 'Head or Chief of the Mound', and that the story of its inclined position suggests to us an ancient and gradually falling menhir planted on the summit of a tumulus or hill surrounded by twelve lesser pillar stones, all thirteen—itsself a sacred number—regarded as the abodes of gods or else as gods themselves; and these gods are referred to as the demon exorcized from the place by Patrick. The central menhir or Cenn Cruaich probably represents the Solar God, and the twelve menhirs surrounding this probably represent the twelve months of the year.<sup>442</sup> In the *Colloquy* it is said that Patrick went his way 'to sow faith and piety, to banish devils and wizards out of Ireland; to raise up saints and righteous, to erect crosses, station-stones, and altars; also to overthrow idols and goblin images, and the whole art of sorcery'.<sup>443</sup> Welsh tradition says that St. David split the capstone of

the Maen Ketti Cromlech (dolmen)<sup>444</sup> in Gower, in order to prove to the people that there was nothing divine in it.<sup>445</sup>

According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Merlin constructed Stonehenge by magically transporting from Ireland the ‘Choir of the Giants’, apparently an ancient Irish circle of stones.<sup>446</sup> The rational explanation of this myth seems to be that the stones of Stonehenge, not belonging to the native rocks of South England, as geologists well know, were probably transported from some distant part of Britain and set up on Salisbury Plain, because of some magical properties supposed to have been possessed by them; and most likely ‘the stones were regarded as divine or as seats of divine power’.<sup>447</sup> And further (thereby admitting the sacred purpose of the group), Sir John Rhys sees no objection to identifying Stonehenge with the famous temple of Apollo in the island of the Hyperboreans, referred to in the journal of Pytheas’ travels.<sup>448</sup> According to Sir John Rhys’s interpretation of this journal, ‘the kings of the city containing the temple and the overseers of the latter were the Boreads, who took up the government in succession, according to their tribes. The citizens gave themselves up to music, harping and chanting in honour of the Sun-god, who was every nineteenth year wont himself to appear about the time of the vernal equinox, and to go on harping and dancing in the sky until the rising of the Pleiades.’<sup>448</sup>

Two menhirs, roughly hewn to simulate the human form, are yet to be found in Guernsey, Channel Islands, and formerly there was a similar menhir in the Breton village of Baud, Morbihan. One of the Guernsey figures was dug up in 1878 under the chancel of the C  tel Church, and then placed in the churchyard, so that in this instance it seems highly probable that the Christian Church was built on the site of a sacred pagan shrine where a cult of stones once existed. The second stone figure (a female), now standing as a gate-post in the churchyard of St. Martin’s parish, seems also to mark a spot where a pre-Christian sanctuary was christianized. The country-people of the district, up to the middle of the last century, considered it lucky to make floral and even food offerings to this stone; but in 1860 the churchwarden to destroy its sanctity had it broken in two,



though now it has been restored.<sup>449</sup> A like stone image was the famous ‘Vénus de Quinipilly’, near Baud, Morbihan. At its base was a stone trough, wherein until late into the seventeenth century the sick were cured by contact with the image, and young men and maidens were wont to bathe to secure love and long life.<sup>449</sup>

Canon Mahé recorded in 1825 that the folk-belief located ghosts and spirits of the dead round megalithic monuments, more especially those known to have been used for tombs, because the Celts thought them haunted by ancestral spirits;<sup>450</sup> and what was true in 1825 is true now, for there is still in Brittany the association of ancestral spirits, *corrigans*, and other spirit-like tribes with tumuli, dolmens, menhirs, and cromlechs, and, as we have shown in chapter ii, a very living faith in the *Légende de la Mort*. In describing some curious dolmens and cromlechs (stone circles) on the summit of a mountain called the *Clech* or *Mané er kloch*, ‘Mountain of the bell,’ at Mendon, Arrondissement de Lorient, Morbihan, the same author gives it as his opinion, based on folk-traditions, that the cromlechs, like others in Brittany, were places in which the ancient Bretons practised necromancy and invoked the spirits of their ancestors, to whom they attributed great power. He then records a very valuable and interesting tradition concerning these monuments, which seems to indicate clearly a close relationship between the *Poulpiquets* (another name for *corrigans*), thought of as spirits by the peasants, and the magical rites conducted in the circles to invoke spirits or daemons:—‘The people call the stones which are found there the rocks of the *Hoséguéannets* or *Guerriionets* (who are the same as the *Poulpiquets*); and they declare that at fixed seasons they are in the habit of coming there to celebrate their mysteries, which would prove that the race of these dwarfs is not yet extinct, as I believed.’<sup>451</sup>

When we hear how *corrigans* dance the national Breton *ronde* or *ridée*, at or in such cromlechs (themselves, like the dance, circular in form), which with other ancient stone monuments and earthworks are still believed to be the favourite haunts of these and kindred spirit-tribes, we seem to see, in the light of what Canon Mahé records, a psychical folk-memory about a goblin race who are now thought of as frequenting the very places where anciently

such spirits are said to have been invoked by pagan priests for the purposes of divination. Further, it appears that at these sacred centres, as the quoted tradition indicates, in prehistoric times Brythonic initiations took place, like those still flourishing among a few surviving American Indian tribes (who also dance the circular initiation dance), and among other primitive peoples, as we shall more adequately show in the chapter on St. Patrick's Purgatory. The Breton dance is, therefore, most likely the memorial of an ancient initiation dance, religious in character, and, probably, in honour of the sun, being circular in the same way that cromlechs dedicated to a sun-cult are circular. Stonehenge, the most highly developed type of the cromlech, was undoubtedly a sun-temple; and the dance anciently held in it, as described by Pytheas, in honour of the god Apollo, was no doubt circular like the Breton national dance, and, presumably, initiatory.<sup>452</sup> Through a natural anthropomorphic process, this circular initiation dance has come to be attributed to *corrigans* in Brittany, to pixies in Cornwall and in England, and to fairies in these and other Celtic countries. The idea of fairy tribes in such a special relation may result from a folk-memory of the actual initiators who, as masked men, represented spirits; and, if this be a plausible view, then fairies may be compared to the initiators of contemporary initiation ceremonies among primitive peoples and, following Dr. Gilbert Murray's theory, to the Greek satyrs also.<sup>453</sup>

A circular dance like the Breton one still survives among the peasantry in the Channel Islands, at least in Guernsey, Alderney, and Sark, being celebrated at weddings, but the revolution is now around a person instead of a stone, and to this person obeisance is paid. This tends to confirm our opinion that the dance is the survival of an ancient sun-dance, the central figure being typical of the sun deity himself, or Apollo; and if we design this dance thus ☉, we have the astronomical emblem still used in all our calendars to represent the sun, one which in itself preserves a vast mass of forgotten lore. Formerly in Guernsey, the sites of principal dolmens (or cromlechs) and pillar-stones were visited in sacred procession, and round certain of them the whole body of pilgrims 'solemnly revolved three times from east to west'—as the sun moves.<sup>454</sup>

Again, according to Canon Mahé,<sup>455</sup> the bases and lower parts of the sides of four singular barrows at Coët-bihan blend in such a way as to form an enclosed court, and one of the barrows has been pierced as though for a passage-way into this court. And he holds that it is more than probable that these ancient earthworks when first they were raised, and others like them in various Celtic lands, witnessed many mystic and religious rites and sacred tribal assemblies. The supposition that the Coët-bihan earthworks were originally dedicated to pagan religious usages is very much strengthened by the fact that in very early times a Christian chapel was erected near them.<sup>456</sup> Mont St. Michel at Carnac is another example of a pagan tumulus dedicated to a Christian saint; and, as Sir John Rhÿs says, the Archangel Michael appears in more places than one in Celtic lands as the supplanter of the dark powers.<sup>457</sup> Not only were tumuli thus transferred by re-dedication from pagan gods to Christian saints, but dolmens and menhirs as well. Thus, for example, at Plouharnel-Carnac (Morbihan) there is a menhir surmounted by a Christian cross, just as at Dol (Ille-et-Vilaine) a wooden crucifix surmounts the great menhir, and at Carnac there is a dolmen likewise christianized by a stone cross-mounted on the table-stone. Again, M. J. Déchelette in his *Manuel d'Archéologie Préhistorique, Celtique et Gallo-Romaine* (p. 380) describes a dolmen at Plouaret (Côtes-du-Nord) converted into a chapel dedicated to the Seven Saints, and another dolmen at Saint-Germain-de-Confolens (Charente) likewise transformed into a place of worship. Miss Edith F. Carey thus explains the dolmens in the Channel Islands:—‘All our old traditions prove our dolmens to have been the general rendezvous of our insular sorcerers. In sixteenth and seventeenth century manuscripts I have found these dolmens described as “altars of the gods of the sea”.... One of our ancient dolmens retains its ancient name of De Hus, and a fifteenth-century “Perchage” of Fief de Léree tells us that a now destroyed dolmen on our western coast was dedicated to the same god, for Heus or Hesus was the War-God of ancient Gaul.’<sup>458</sup> The same writer describes excavations made at De Hus by Mr. Lukis, and that he found in a side chamber there two kneeling skeletons, one facing the north, the other the south. He considered them to

have been of young persons probably interred alive as a funeral or propitiatory sacrifice to some tribal chief, or else to a presiding deity of the dolmen. Beside a tomb of the early bronze age at the bottom of a large tumulus near Mammarlöf, in Skåne, Dr. Oscar Montelius, the famous archaeologist of Sweden, discovered a circular stone altar on which reposed charcoal and the remains of a burnt animal offering, which undoubtedly was made to the dead.<sup>459</sup> Schliemann made a parallel discovery in an ancient tomb at Mycenae, Greece.<sup>460</sup> Curiously, in India to-day the Dravidian tribes, a pygmy-like aboriginal race, worship at the ancient dolmens in their forests and mountains, whether as at tombs and hence to ancestral spirits or to gods is not always clear; but the latter form of worship is probably more common, since Mr. Walhouse once observed one of their medicine-men performing a propitiatory service to the agricultural or earth deities. The medicine-man passed the night in solitude sitting ‘on the capstone of a dolmen with heels and hams drawn together and chin on knee’—evidently thus to await the advent of the Sun-god.<sup>461</sup>

All the above illustrations, mostly Celtic ones, tend to prove that menhirs, certain tumuli and earthworks, cromlechs, and dolmens were originally connected with religious usages, chiefly with a cult of gods and fairy-like beings, and, though less commonly, with the dead. We pass now to a special consideration of chambered tumuli, to show that the same apparently holds true of them.

## **New Grange and Celtic Mysteries**

Though, as Professor J. Loth and other eminent archaeologists hold, all tumuli containing chambers, and all *allées couvertes* of dolmens, should be considered as designedly funereal in their purposes, nevertheless certain of the greater ones, like New Grange and Gavrinis may also properly be considered as places for rendering worship or even sacrifice to the dead, and, perhaps, as places for religious pilgrimages and sacred rites. This, too, seems to be the opinion of M. J. Déchelette in his work on Celtic and Gallo-

Roman archaeology, as he traces from the earliest prehistoric times in Europe the evolution of the cult of the dead according to the evidence furnished by the ancient megalithic monuments.<sup>462</sup>

To begin with, let us take as a type for our study the most famous of all so-called Celtic tumuli, that of New Grange, on the River Boyne in Ireland.<sup>463</sup> In Irish literature New Grange is constantly associated with the Tuatha De Danann as one of their palaces, as our fourth chapter points out. Throughout our second section generally, the testimony indicates that the essential nature of these fairy-folk is subjective or spiritual. These two facts at the outset are very important and fundamental, because we expect to show even more clearly than we have just done in the case of menhirs, dolmens, cromlechs, and smaller tumuli, that the folk-belief under consideration is at bottom a psychical one, which has grown up out of a folk-memory of the time when, as has just been said, Celtic or pre-Celtic tumuli were used for interments, and probably certain ones among them as places for the celebration of pagan mysteries.

Mr. George Coffey, the eminent archaeologist in charge of the archaeological collections of the Royal Irish Academy, quotes from ancient Irish records in the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre* and other manuscripts to show that the early traditions refer to the Boyne country as the burial-place of the kings of Tara, and that sometimes they seem to associate *Brugh-na-Boyne* with the tumuli on the Boyne,<sup>464</sup> but, no exact identification being possible, it cannot be said with certainty whether any one of the three great Boyne tumuli is meant. Even though it could be shown conclusively that some mighty hero or king had actually been entombed in New Grange, as is likely, in the earth behind the chamber, under the chamber's floor, or even within the chamber, still, as we have already pointed out, most of the great Irish heroes and kings were in popular belief literally gods incarnate, and, therefore (as commonly among all ancient peoples, civilized and non-civilized, who held the same doctrine), the tomb of such a divine personage came to be regarded as the actual dwelling of the once incarnate god, even though his bones were long turned to dust. The *Book of Ballymote* strengthens this suggestion: in one of its ancient Irish poems, by MacNia,

son of Oenna, preceded by this mystical dedication, ‘Ye Poets of Bregia, of truth, not false,’ the wonders of the Palace of the Boyne, the Hall of the great god Daghdha, supreme king and oracle of the Tuatha de Danann, are thus celebrated:—

Behold the *Sidh* before your eyes,  
It is manifest to you that it is a king’s mansion,  
Which was built by the firm Daghdha;  
It was a wonder, a court, an admirable hill.<sup>465</sup>

It seems clear enough, from the old Irish manuscripts referred to by Mr. Coffey,<sup>466</sup> that the Boyne country near Tara was the sacred and religious centre of ancient Ireland, and was used by the Irish in very much the same way as Memphis and other places on the sacred Nile were used by the ancient Egyptians, both as a royal cemetery and as a place for the celebration of pagan mysteries. It is known that most of the Mysteries of Antiquity were psychic in their nature, having to do with the neophyte’s entrance into Hades or the invisible world while out of the physical body, or else with direct communication with gods, spirits, and shades of the dead, while in the physical body; and such mysteries were performed in darkened chambers from which all light was excluded. These chambers were often carved out of solid rock, as can be seen in the Rock Temples of India; and when mountain caves or natural caverns were not available, artificial ones were used (see chapter x).

The places, like Tara and Memphis, where the great men and kings of the nations of antiquity were entombed, being the most sacred, were very often, on that account, also the places dedicated to the most magnificent temples and to the Mysteries, or among less advanced nations to the worship of the dead. On every side of sacred Stonehenge, Salisbury Plain is dotted with the burial mounds of unknown heroes and chieftains of ancient Britain; while in modern times, even though the Mysteries are long forgotten, Westminster Abbey, at the centre of the planet’s capital, has, in turn, become the hallowed Hall of the Mighty Dead for the vast British

Empire. In view of all these facts, after a careful examination of the famous New Grange tumulus itself, and a study of the references to it in old Irish literature, we are firmly of the opinion that one cannot be far wrong in describing it as a spirit-temple in which were celebrated ancient Celtic or pre-Celtic Mysteries at the time when neophytes, including those of royal blood, were initiated; and as such it is directly related to a cult of the Tuatha De Danann or Fairy-Folk, of spirits, and of the dead. Nor are we alone in this opinion. Mr. Coffey himself, we believe, is inclined to favour it; and Mr. W. C. Borlase, author of *The Dolmens of Ireland*, who is quite committed to it, says that it is not necessary, as some do, to consider New Grange as an ancient abode of mortal men, for ‘the spirits of the dead, the fairies, the *Sidhe*, might have had their *brugh*, or palace, as well’.<sup>467</sup> And he points out that in the old Irish manuscripts we have proof that it was supposed to be thus used. This proof is found in the *Agallamh na Senórach* or ‘Colloquy with the Ancients’ by St. Patrick, from the *Book of Lismore*, a fifteenth-century manuscript copied from older manuscripts and now translated by Standish H. O’Grady:—The three sons of the King of Ireland, by name Ruidhe, Fiacha, and Eochaid, leaving their nurse’s and guardian’s house, went to *fert na ndruadh*, i.e. ‘grave of the wizards’, north-west of Tara, to ask of their father a country, a domain; but he refused their request, and then they formed a project to gain lands and riches by fasting on the *tuatha dé Danann* at the *brugh* upon the Boyne: “‘Lands therefore I will not bestow on you, but win lands for yourself.” Thereupon they with the ready rising of one man rose and took their way to the green of the *brugh* upon the Boyne where, none other being in their company, they sat them down. Ruidhe said: “What is your plan to-night?” His brothers rejoined: “Our project is to fast on the *tuatha dé Danann*, aiming thus to win from them good fortune in the shape of a country, of a domain, of lands, and to have vast riches.” Nor had they been long there when they marked a cheery-looking young man of a pacific demeanour that came towards them. He salutes the king of Ireland’s sons; they answer him after the same manner. “Young man, whence art thou? whence comest thou?” “Out of yonder *brugh* chequered with the many lights hard by you here.” “What name

wearest thou?” “I am the Daghdha’s son Bodhb Derg; and to the *tuatha dé Danann* it was revealed that ye would come to fast here to-night, for lands and for great fortune.” Then with Bodhb Derg, the three sons of Ireland’s king entered into the *brugh*, and the *tuatha dé Danann* went into council, and Midhir Yellow-mane son of the Daghdha who presided said: ‘Those yonder accommodate now with three wives, since from wives it is that either fortune or misfortune is derived.’ And from their marriages with the three daughters of Midhir they derived all their wishes—territories and wealth in the greatest abundance. ‘For three days with their nights they abode in the *sídh*.’ ‘Angus told them to carry away out of *fídh omna*, i.e. “Oakwood,” three apple-trees: one in full bloom, another shedding the blossom, and another covered with ripe fruit. Then they repaired to the *dún*, where they abode for three times fifty years, and until those kings disappeared; for in virtue of marriage alliance they returned again to the *tuatha dé Danann*, and from that time forth have remained there.’<sup>468</sup>

Mr. Borlase, commenting on this passage, suggests its importance in proving to us that during the Middle Ages there existed a tradition, thus committed to writing from older manuscripts or from oral sources, regarding ‘the nature of the rites performed in pagan times at those places, which were held sacred to the heathen mysteries’.<sup>469</sup> The passage evidently describes a cult of royal or famous ancestral spirits identified with the god-race of Tuatha De Danann, who, as we know, being reborn as mortals, ruled Ireland. These ancestral spirits were to be approached by a pilgrimage made to their abode, the spirit-haunted tumulus, and a residence in it of three days and three nights during which period there was to be an unbroken fast. Sacrifices were doubtless offered to the gods, or spirit-ancestors; and while they were ‘fasted upon’, they were expected to appear and grant the pilgrim’s prayer and to speak with him. All this indicates that the existence of invisible beings was taken for granted, probably through the knowledge gained by initiation.

The *Echtra Neraí* or the ‘Adventures of Nera’ (see this study, p. 287), contains a description like the one above, of how a mortal named Nera went into the *Sídh*-palace at Cruachan; and it is said that he went not only into



the cave (*uamh*) but into the *síd* of the cave. The term *uamh* or cave, according to Mr. Borlase, indicates the whole of the interior vaulted chamber, while the *síd* of that vaulted chamber or *uamh* is intended to refer to ‘the *sanctum sanctorum*, or *penetralia* of the spirit-temple, upon entering into which the mortal came face to face with the royal occupants, and there doubtless he lay fasting, or offering his sacrifices, at the periods prescribed’.<sup>470</sup> The word *brugh* refers simply to the appearance of a tumulus, or souterrain beneath a fort or rath, and means, therefore, mansion or dwelling-place.<sup>471</sup> And Mr. Borlase adds:—‘I feel but little doubt that in the inner chamber at New Grange, with its three recesses and its basin, we have this *síd of the cave*, and the place where the pilgrims fasted—a situation and a practice precisely similar to those which, under Christian auspices, were continued at such places as the Leaba Mologa in Cork, the original Patrick’s Purgatory in Lough Derg, and elsewhere. The practice of lying in stone troughs was a feature of the Christian pilgrimages in Ireland. Sometimes such troughs had served the previous purpose of stone coffins. It is just possible that the shallow basins in the cells at Lough Crew, New Grange, and Dowth may, like the stone beds or troughs of the saints,<sup>472</sup> have been occupied by the pilgrims engaged in their devotions. If so, however, they must have sat in them in Eastern fashion.’<sup>471</sup>

Again, in the popular tale called *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainnè*,<sup>473</sup> Aengus, the son of the Dagda, one of the Tuatha De Danann, is called Aengus-an-Bhrogha, and connected with the *Brugh-na-Boinne*. In the tale Finn says, ‘Let us leave this tulach, for fear that Aengus-an-Bhrogha and the Tuatha-De-Danann might catch us; and though we have no part in the slaying of Diarmuid, he would none the more readily believe us.’ Aengus is evidently an invisible being with great power over mortals. This is clear in what follows: he transports Diarmuid’s body to the *Brugh-na-Boinne*, saying, ‘Since I cannot restore him to life, I will send a soul into him, so that he may talk to me each day.’ Thus, as the presiding deity of the *brugh*, Aengus the Tuatha De Danann could reanimate dead bodies ‘and cause them to speak to devotees, we may suppose oracularly.’<sup>474</sup> In the

*Bruighion Chaorthainn* or ‘Fort of the Rowan Tree’, a Fenian tale, a poet put Finn under taboo to understand these verses:—

I saw a house in the country  
Out of which no hostages are given to a king,  
Fire burns it not, harrying spoils it not.

And Finn made reply:—‘I understand that verse, for that is the Brugh of the Boyne that you have seen (perhaps, as we suggest, during an initiation), namely, the house of Aengus Og of the Brugh, and it cannot be burned or harried as long as Aengus (a god) shall live.’ As Mr. Borlase observes, to say that ‘no hostages are given to a king’ out of the *Brugh* is probably another way of saying that the dead pay no taxes, or that being a holy place, the *Brugh* was exempt.<sup>475</sup> This last evidence is from oral tradition, and rather late in being placed on record; but it is not on that account less trustworthy, and may be much more so than the older manuscripts. Until quite modern times the folk-lore of the Boyne country still echoed similar traditions about unknown mystic rites, following what O’Donovan has recorded; for he has said that Aenghus-an-Bhrogha was considered the presiding fairy of the Boyne till quite within recent times, and that his name was still familiar to the old inhabitants of Meath who were then fast forgetting their traditions with the Irish language.<sup>476</sup> And this tradition brings us to consider what was apparently an Aengus Cult among the ancient Celtic peoples.

## **The Aengus Cult**

Euhemeristic tradition came to represent the Great God Dagda and his sons as buried in a tumulus, probably New Grange, and then called it, as I found it called to-day, a fairy mound, a name given also to Gavrinis, its Breton parallel. The older and clearer tradition relates how Aengus gained possession of the *Brugh* of the Boyne, and says nothing about it as a

cemetery, but rather describes it as ‘an admirable place, more accurately speaking, as an admirable land, a term which betrays the usual identification of the fairy mound with the nether world to which it formed the entrance’.<sup>477</sup> The myth placing Dagda at the head of the departed makes him ‘a Goidelic Cronus ruling over an Elysium with which a sepulchral mound was associated’.<sup>477</sup> The displacement of Dagda by his son makes ‘Mac Oc (Aengus), who should have been the youthful Zeus of the Goidelic world, rejoicing in the translucent expanse of the heavens as his crystal bower’, a king of the dead.<sup>477</sup>

In Dun Aengus, the strange cyclopean circular structure, and hence most likely sun-temple, on Aranmore, we have another example of the localization of the Aengus myth. This fact leads us to believe, after due archaeological examination, that amid the stronghold of Dun Aengus, with its tiers of amphitheatre-like seats and the native rock at its centre, apparently squared to form a platform or stage, were anciently celebrated pagan mysteries comparable to those of the Greeks and less cultured peoples, and initiations into an Aengus Cult such as seems to have once flourished at New Grange. At Dun Aengus, however, the mystic assemblies and rites, conducted in such a sun-temple, so secure and so strongly fortified against intrusion, no doubt represented a somewhat different mystical school, and probably one very much older than at New Grange. In the same manner, each of the other circular but less important cyclopean structures on Aranmore and elsewhere in west Ireland may have been structures for closely related sun-cults. To our mind, and we have carefully and at leisure examined most of these cyclopean structures on Aranmore, it seems altogether fanciful to consider them as having been *originally* and *primarily* intended as places of refuge—*dúns* or forts. Yet, because the ancient Celts never separated civil and religious functions, such probable sun-temples could have been as frequently used for non-religious tribal assemblies as for initiation ceremonies; and nothing makes it impossible for them to have been in times of need also places for refuge against enemies. We are led to this view with respect to Dun Aengus in particular, because the Aengus of Aranmore is known as Aengus, son of Umór, and is

associated with the mystic people called the Fir Bolg; and, yet, as Sir John Rhys thinks, this Aengus, son of Umór, and Aengus, son of Dagda, are two aspects of a single god, a Celtic Zeus.<sup>478</sup> O'Curry's statements about Dun Aengus seem to confirm all this; and there seems to have been a tale, now lost, about the 'Destruction of *Dún Oengusa*' (in modern Irish *Dún Aonghuis*), the Fortress of Aengus.<sup>478</sup>

This sun-cult, represented in Ireland by the Aengus Cult, can be traced further: Sir John Rhys regards Stonehenge—a sun-temple also circular like the Irish *dúns* and Breton cromlechs—as a temple to the Celtic Zeus, in Irish mythology typified by Aengus, and in Welsh by Merlin:—‘What sort of a temple could have been more appropriate for the primary god of light and of the luminous heavens than a spacious, open-air enclosure of a circular form like Stonehenge?’<sup>479</sup> In Welsh myth, Math ab Mathonwy, called also ‘Math the Ancient’, was the greatest magician of ancient Wales, and his relation as teacher to Gwydion ab Dôn, the great Welsh Culture Hero, leads Sir John Rhys to consider him the Brythonic Zeus, though Merlin shares with him in this distinction;<sup>480</sup> and since the Gaelic counterpart of Math is Aengus, a close study of Math might finally show a cult in his honour in Wales as we have found in Ireland an Aengus Cult.<sup>481</sup> We may, therefore, with more or less exactness, equate the Aengus Cult as we see it in Irish myth connected chiefly with Dun Aengus and New Grange, with the unknown cult practised at Stonehenge, and this in turn with other Brythonic or pre-Brythonic sun-cults and initiations practised at Carnac, the great Celtic Jerusalem in Brittany, and at Gavrinis. All this will be more clearly seen after we have set forth what seems a definite and most striking parallel to New Grange, both as a monument erected by man and, as we maintain, as a place for religious mysteries—the greatest structure ever raised by human effort, the Great Pyramid.

## **New Grange and the Great Pyramid compared**

Caliph Al Mamoun in A. D. 820, by a forced passage, was the first in modern times to enter the Great Pyramid, and he found nowhere a mummy or any indications that the structure had ever been used as a tomb for the dead. The King's Chamber, so named by us moderns, proved to be a keen disappointment for its first violator, for in it there was neither gold nor silver nor anything at all worth carrying away. The magnificent chamber contained nothing save an empty stone chest without a lid. Archaeologists in Egypt and archaeologists in Ireland face the same unsolved problem, namely, the purpose of the empty stone chest without inscriptions and quite unlike a mummy tomb, and of the stone basin in New Grange.<sup>482</sup> Certain Egyptologists have supposed that some royal personage must have been buried in the curious granite coffer, though there can be only their supposition to support them, for they have absolutely no proof that such is true, while there is strong circumstantial evidence to show that such is not true. Sir Gardner Wilkinson in his well-known publications has already suggested that the stone chest as well as the Great Pyramid itself were never intended to hold a corpse; and it is generally admitted by Egyptologists that no sarcophagus intended for a mummy has ever been found so high up in the body of a pyramid as this empty stone chest, except in the Second Pyramid. Incontestable evidence in support of the highly probable theory that the Great Pyramid was not intended for an actual tomb can be drawn from two important facts:—(1) 'the coffer has certain remarkable cubic proportions which show a care and design beyond what could be expected in any burial-coffer'—according to the high authority of Dr. Flinders Petrie; (2) the chamber containing the coffer and the upper passage-ways have ventilating channels not known in any other Pyramid, so that apparently there must have been need of frequent entrance into the chamber by living men, as would be the case if used, as we hold, for initiation ceremonies.<sup>483</sup>

It is well known that very many of the megalithic monuments of the New Grange type scattered over Europe, especially from the Carnac centre of Brittany to the Tara-Boyne centre of Ireland, have one thing in common, an astronomical arrangement like the Great Pyramid, and an entrance facing one of the points of the solstices, usually either the winter solstice, which is

common, or the summer solstice.<sup>484</sup> The puzzle has always been to discover the exact arrangement of the Great Pyramid by locating its main entrance. A Californian, Mr. Louis P. McCarty, in his recent (1907) work entitled *The Great Pyramid Jeezeh*, suggests with the most logical and reasonable arguments that the builders of the Pyramid have placed its main entrance in an undiscovered passage-way beneath the Great Sphinx, now half-buried in the shifting desert sands. If it can be shown that the Sphinx is the real portal, and many things tend to indicate that it is, the Great Pyramid is built on the same plan as New Grange, that is to say, it opens to the south-east, and like New Grange contains a narrow passage-way leading to a central chamber. South-easterly from the centre of the Pyramid lies the Sphinx, 5,380 feet away, a distance equal to ‘just five times the distance of the “diagonal socket length” of the Great Pyramid from the centre of the Subterranean Chamber, under the Pyramid, to the supposed entrance under the Sphinx’<sup>485</sup>—a distance quite in keeping with the mighty proportions of the wonderful structure. And what is important, several eminent archaeologists have worked out the same conclusion, and have been seeking to connect the two monuments by making excavations in the Queen’s Chamber, where it is supposed there exists a tunnel to the Sphinx. In all this we should bear in mind that the present entrance to the Pyramid is the forced one made by the treasure-seeking Caliph.

This very probable astronomical parallelism between the great Egyptian monument and the Irish one would establish their common religious, or, in a mystic sense, their funereal significance. In the preceding chapter we have set forth what symbolical relation the sun, its rising and setting, and its death at the winter equinox, were anciently supposed to hold to the doctrines of human death and re-birth. Jubainville, regarding the sun among the Celts in its symbolical relation to death, wrote, ‘In Celtic belief, the dead go to live beyond the Ocean, to the south-west, there where the sun sets during the greater part of the year.’<sup>486</sup> This, too, as M. Maspero shows, was an Egyptian belief;<sup>487</sup> while, as equally among the Celts, the east, especially the south-east, where, after the winter solstice, the sun seems to be re-born or to rise out of the underworld of Hades into which it goes when

it dies, is symbolical of the reverse—Life, Resurrection, and Re-birth. In this last Celtic-Egyptian belief, we maintain, may be found the reason why the chief megalithic monuments (dolmens, tumuli, and alignements), in Celtic countries and elsewhere, have their directions east and west, and why those like New Grange and Gavrinis open to the sunrise.

Greek temples also opened to the sunrise, and on the divine image within fell the first rays of the beautiful god Apollo.<sup>488</sup> In the great Peruvian sun-temple at Cuzco, a splendid disk of pure gold faced the east, and, reflecting the first rays of the rising sun, illuminated the whole sanctuary.<sup>489</sup> The cave-temple of the Florida Red Men opened eastward, and within its entrance on festival days stood the priest at dawn watching for the first ray of the sun, as a sign to begin the chant and offering.<sup>490</sup> The East Indian performs the ablution at dawn in the sacred Ganges, and stands facing the east meditating, as Brahma appears in all the wondrous glory of a tropical sunrise.<sup>491</sup> And in the same Aryan land there is an opposite worship: the dreaded Thugs, worshippers of devils and of Kali the death-goddess, in their most diabolical rites face the west and the sunset, symbols of death.<sup>492</sup> How Christianity was shaped by paganism is nowhere clearer than in the orientation of great cathedral churches (almost without exception in England), for all of the more famous ones have their altars eastward; and Roman Catholics in prayer in their church services, and Anglicans in repeating the Creed, turn to the east, as the Hindu does. St. Augustine says:—‘When we stand at prayer, we turn to the east, where the heaven arises, not as though God were only there, and had forsaken all other parts of the world, but to admonish our mind to turn to a more excellent nature, that is, to the Lord.’<sup>493</sup> Though the Jews came to be utterly opposed to sun-worship in their later history, they were sun-worshippers at first, as their temples opening eastward testify. This was the vision of Ezekiel:—‘And, behold, at the door of the temple of Jehovah, between the porch and the Altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of Jehovah, and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east.’<sup>494</sup>

All this illustrates the once world-wide religion of our race; and shows that sun-cults and sun-symbols are derived from a universal doctrine regarding the two states of existence—the one in Hades or the invisible lower world where the Sun-god goes at night, and the other in what we call the visible realm which the Sun-god visits daily.<sup>495</sup> The relation between life and death—symbolically figured in this fundamental conception forming the background of every sun-cult—is the foundation of all ancient mysteries. Thus we should expect the correspondences which we believe do exist between New Grange and the Great Pyramid. Both alike, in our opinion, were the greatest places in the respective countries for the celebration of the Mysteries. High up in the body of the Great Pyramid, after he had performed the long underground journey, typical of the journey of Osiris or the Sun to the Otherworld or the World of the Dead, we may suppose (knowing what we do of the Ancient Mysteries and their shadows in modern Masonic initiations<sup>496</sup>) that the royal or priestly neophyte laid himself in that strange stone coffin without a lid, for a certain period of time—probably for three days and three nights. Then, the initiation being complete, he arose from the mystic death to a real resurrection, a true child of Osiris. In New Grange we may suppose that the royal or priestly neophyte, while he ‘fasted on the Tuatha De Danann for three days with their nights’, sat in that strange stone basin after the manner of the Orient.<sup>497</sup>

The Great Pyramid seems to be the most ancient of the Egyptian pyramids, and undoubtedly was the model for all the smaller ones, which ‘always betray profound ignorance of their noble model’s chiefest internal features, as well as of all its niceties of angle and cosmic harmonies of linear measurement’.<sup>498</sup> Dr. Flinders Petrie says:—‘The Great Pyramid at Gizeh (of Khufu, fourth dynasty) unquestionably takes the lead, in accuracy and in beauty of work, as well as in size. Not only is the fine work of it in the pavement, casing, King’s and Queen’s chambers quite unexcelled; but the general character of the core masonry is better than that of any other pyramid in its solidity and regularity.’<sup>499</sup> And of the stone coffers he says:—‘Taking most of its dimensions at their maximum, they agree closely with



the same theory as that which is applicable to the chambers; for when squared they are all even multiples of a square fifth of a cubit. . . . There is no other theory applicable to every lineal dimension of the coffer; but having found the  $\pi$  proportion in the form of the Pyramid, and in the King's Chamber, there is some ground for supposing that it was intended also in the coffer, on just one-fifth the scale of the chamber.'<sup>499</sup> And here is apparent the important fact we wish to emphasize; the Great Pyramid does not seem to have been intended primarily, if at all, for the entombment of dead bodies or mummies while 'the numerous quasi-copies' were 'for sepulchral purposes'<sup>500</sup> without doubt. There appears to have been at first a clear understanding of the esoteric usage of the Great Pyramid as a place for the mystic burial of Initiates, and then in the course of national decadence the exoteric interpretation of this usage, the interpretation now popular with Egyptologists, led to the erection of smaller pyramids for purposes of actual burial. And may we not see in such pyramid-like tumuli as those of Mont St. Michel, Gavrinis, and New Grange copies of these smaller funeral pyramids;<sup>501</sup> or, if not direct copies, at least the result of a similar religious decadence from the unknown centuries since the Great Pyramid was erected by the Divine Kings of prehistoric Egypt as a silent witness for all ages that Great Men, Initiates, have understood Universal Law, and have solved the greatest of all human problems, the problem of Life and Death?

### **Gavrinis and New Grange Compared**

In conclusion, and in support of the arguments already advanced, I offer a few observations of my own, made at Gavrinis itself, the most famous tumulus in Continental Europe. After a very careful examination of the interior and exterior of the tumulus, an examination extending over more than twelve hours, I am convinced that its curious rock-carvings and those in New Grange are by the same race of people, whoever that race may have been; and that there is sufficient evidence in its construction to show that, like New Grange, it was quite as religious as funereal in its nature and use.

The facts which bear out this view are the following. First, there are three strange cavities cut into the body of the stone on the south side of the inner chamber, communicating interiorly with one another, and large enough to admit human hands; if used as places in which to offer sacrifice to the dead or fairies, small objects could have been placed in them. In the oldest extant authentic records of them which I have found it is said of their probable purpose:—‘Some people look on them as a double noose intended to strangle the [animal] victims which the priest sacrificed; for others they are two rings behind which the hands of the betrothed met each other to be married.’<sup>502</sup> Their purpose is certainly difficult enough to decipher, perhaps is undecipherable; but one thing about them is certain, namely, that a close examination round their exterior edges and within them also shows the rock-surface worn smooth as though by ages of handling and touching; and it is incontestable that this wearing of the rock-surface by human hands could not have taken place had the inner chamber been sealed up and used solely as a tomb. We suggest here, as Sir James Fergusson in his *Rude Stone Monuments* (p. 366) has suggested, that the inner chamber of Gavrinis was probably a place for the celebration of religious rites: he advances the opinion that the strange cavities were used to contain holy oil or holy water. There is this second curious fact connected with the tumulus of Gavrinis. On entering it—and it opens like New Grange to the sunrise, being oriented  $43^{\circ} 60''$  to the south-east<sup>503</sup>—one finds placed across the floor of the narrow passage-way as slightly inclined steps rising to the inner chamber three or four stones. Two of them, now very prominent, form veritable stumbling-blocks, and the one at the threshold of the inner chamber is carved quite like the lintel stone above the entrance at New Grange.<sup>504</sup> From what we know of ancient mystic cults, there was a darkened chamber approached by a narrow passage-way so low that the neophyte must stoop in traversing it to show symbolically his humility; and as symbolic of his progress to the Chamber of Death, the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of the spirit-temple, there were steps, often purposely placed as stumbling-blocks. The Great Pyramid, evidently, conforms to this mystical plan; and strikes one, therefore, all the more forcibly as the most remarkable structure for

initiatory ceremonies ever constructed on our planet. Thus, Dr. Flinders Petrie says:—‘But we are met then by an extraordinary idea, that all access to the King’s chamber after its completion must have been by climbing over the plug-blocks, as they lay in the gallery, or by walking up the ramps on either side of them. Yet, as the blocks cannot physically have been lying in any other place before they were let down we are shut up to this view.’<sup>505</sup> And as Egyptian tombs represented the mansions of the dead,<sup>506</sup> just so Celtic or pre-Celtic spirit-temples and place for initiations were always connected with the Underworld of the Dead; and save for such symbolical arrangements as we see in Gavrinis, and New Grange also, they were undistinguishable from tombs used for interments only.

It seems to us most reasonable to suppose that if, as the old Irish manuscripts show, there were spirit-temples or places for pagan funeral rites, or rites of initiation, in Ireland, constructed like other tumuli which were used only as tombs for the dead (because the ancient cult was one of ancestor worship and worship of gods like the Tuatha De Danann, and spirits), then there must have been others in Brittany also, where we find the same system of rock-inscriptions. Further, in view of all the definite provable relations between Gavrinis and New Grange, we are strongly inclined to regard them both as having the same origin and purpose, Gavrinis being for Armorica what New Grange was for Ireland, the royal or principal spirit-temple.

## **Chapter IX**

### **The Testimony of Paganism**

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‘The cult of forests, of fountains, and of stones is to be explained by that primitive naturalism which all the Church Councils held in Brittany united to proscribe.’—Ernest Renan.

Edicts against pagan cults—Cult of Sacred Waters and its absorption by Christianity—Celtic Water Divinities—Druidic influence on Fairy-Faith—Cult of Sacred Trees—Cult of Fairies, Spirits, and the Dead—Feasts of the Dead—Conclusion.

The evidence of paganism in support of our Psychological Theory concerning the Fairy-Faith is so vast that we cannot do more than point to portions of it—especially such portions as are most Celtic in their nature. Perhaps most of us will think first of all about the ancient cults rendered to fountains, rivers, lakes, trees, and, as we have seen (pp. 399 ff.), to stones. There can be no reasonable doubt that these cults were very flourishing when Christianity came to Europe, for kings, popes, and church councils issued edict after edict condemning them.<sup>507</sup> The second Council of Arles, held about 452, issued the following canon:—‘If in the territory of a bishop, infidels light torches, or venerate trees, fountains, or stones, and he neglects to abolish this usage, he must know that he is guilty of sacrilege. If the director of the act itself, on being admonished, refuses to correct it, he is to be excluded from communion.’<sup>507</sup> The Council of Tours, in 567, thus expressed itself:—‘We implore the pastors to expel from the Church all those whom they may see performing before certain stones things which have no relation with the ceremonies of the Church, and also those who observe the customs of the Gentiles.’<sup>508</sup> King Canute in England and Charlemagne in Europe conducted a most vigorous campaign against all these pagan worships. This is Charlemagne’s edict:—‘With respect to trees, stones, and fountains, where certain foolish people light torches or practise other superstitions, we earnestly ordain that that most evil custom detestable to God, wherever it be found, should be removed and destroyed.’<sup>509</sup>

The result of these edicts was a curious one. It was too much to expect the eradication of the old cults after their age-long existence, and so one by one they were absorbed by the new religion. In a sacred tree or grove, over a holy well or fountain, on the shore of a lake or river, there was placed an image of the Virgin or of some saint, and unconsciously the transformation

was made, as the simple-hearted country-folk beheld in the brilliant images new and more glorious dwelling-places for the spirits they and their fathers had so long venerated.

## **The Cult of Sacred Waters**

In Brittany, perhaps better than in other Celtic countries to-day, one can readily discern this evolution from paganism to Christianity. Thus, for example, in the Morbihan there is the fountain of St. Anne d'Auray, round which centres Brittany's most important Pardon; a fountain near Vannes is dedicated to St. Peter; at Carnac there is the far-famed fountain of St. Cornely with its niche containing an image of Carnac's patron saint, and not far from it, on the roadside leading to Carnac Plage, an enclosed well dedicated to the Holy Virgin; and, less than a mile away, the beautiful fountain of St. Columba. Near Ploermel, Canton of Ploermel (Morbihan), there is the fountain of Recourance or St. Laurent, in which sailors perform divinations to know the future state of the weather by casting on its waters a morsel of bread. If the bread floats, it is a sure sign of fair weather, but if it sinks, of weather so bad that no one should take risks by going out in the fishing-boats. In some wells, pins are dropped by lovers. If the pins float, the water-spirits show favourable auspices, but if the pins sink, the maiden is unhappy, and will hesitate in accepting the proposal of marriage. Long after their conversion, the inhabitants of Concoret (Arrondissement de Ploermel, Morbihan) paid divine honours to the fountain of Baranton in the druidical forest of Brocéliande, so famous in the Breton legends of Arthur and Merlin:—'For a long time the inhabitants of Concoret... in place of addressing themselves to God or to his Saints in their maladies, sought the remedy in the fountain of Baranton, either by praying to it, after the manner of the Gauls, or by drinking of its waters.'<sup>510</sup> In the month of August 1835, when there was an unusual drought in the land, all the inhabitants of Concoret formed in a great procession with banners and crucifix at their head, and with chants and ringing of church bells marched to this same

fountain of Baranton and prayed for rain.<sup>511</sup> This curious bit of history was also reported to me in July 1909 by a peasant who lives near the fountain, and who heard it from his parents; and he added that the foot of the crucifix was planted in the water to aid the rain-making. We have here an interesting combination of paganism and Christianity.

Gregory of Tours says that the country-folk of Gévaudan rendered divine honours to a certain lake, and as offerings cast on its waters linen, wool, cheese, bees'-wax, bread, and other things,<sup>512</sup> and Mahé adds that gold was sometimes offered,<sup>512</sup> quite after the manner of the ancient Peruvians, who cast gold and silver of great value into the waters of sacred Lake Titicaca, high up in the Andes. To absorb into Christianity the worship paid to the lake near Gévaudan, the bishop ordered a church to be built on its shore, and to the people he said:—‘My children, there is nothing divine in this lake: defile not your souls by these vain ceremonies; but recognize rather the true God.’<sup>513</sup> The offerings to the lake-spirits then ceased, and were made instead on the altar of the church. As Canon Mahé so consistently sets forth, other similar means were used to absorb the pagan cults of sacred waters:—‘Other pastors employed a similar device to absorb the cult of fountains into Christianity; they consecrated them to God under the invocation of certain saints; giving the saints’ names to them and placing in them the saints’ images, so that the weak and simple-hearted Christians who might come to them, struck by these names and by these images, should grow accustomed to addressing their prayers to God and to his saints, in place of honouring the fountains themselves, as they had been accustomed to do. This is the reason why there are seen in the stonework of so many fountains, niches and little statues of saints who have given their names to these springs.’<sup>514</sup>

Procopius reports that the Franks, even after having accepted Christianity, remained attached to their ancient cults, sacrificing to the River Po women and children of the Goths, and casting the bodies into its waters to the spirits of the waters.<sup>514</sup> Well-worship in the Isle of Man, not yet quite extinct, was no doubt once very general. As A. W. Moore has shown, the sacred wells in the Isle of Man were visited and offerings made

to them to secure immunity from witches and fairies, to cure maladies, to raise a wind, and for various kinds of divination.<sup>515</sup> And no doubt the offerings of rags on bushes over sacred wells, and the casting of pins, coins, buttons, pebbles, and other small objects into their waters, a common practice yet in Ireland and Wales, as in non-Celtic countries, are to be referred to as survivals of a time when regular sacrifices were offered in divination, or in seeking cures from maladies, and equally from obsessing demons who were thought to cause the maladies. In the prologue to Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* there is an account, seemingly very ancient, of how dishonour to the divinities of wells and springs brought destruction on the rich land of Logres. The damsels who abode in these watery places fed travellers with nourishing food until King Amangons wronged one of them by carrying off her golden cup. His men followed his evil example, so that the springs dried up, the grass withered, and the land became waste.<sup>516</sup>

According to Mr. Borlase, 'it was by passing under the waters of a well that the *Sidh*, that is, the abode of the spirits called *Sidhe*, in the tumulus or natural hill, as the case might be, was reached.'<sup>517</sup> And it is evident from this that the well-spirits were even identified in Ireland with the Tuatha De Danann or Fairy-Folk. I am reminded of a walk I was privileged to take with Mr. William B. Yeats on Lady Gregory's estate at Coole Park, near Gort (County Galway); for Mr. Yeats led me to the haunts of the water-spirits of the region, along a strange river which flows underground for some distance and then comes out to the light again in its weird course, and to a dark, deep pool hidden in the forest. According to tradition, the river is the abode of water-fairies; and in the shaded forest-pool, whose depth is very great, live a spirit-race like the Greek nymphs. More than one mortal while looking into this pool has felt a sudden and powerful impulse to plunge in, for the fairies were then casting their magic spell over him that they might take him to live in their under-water palace for ever.

One of the most beautiful passages in *The Tripartite Life of Patrick* describes the holy man at the holy well called Cliabach:—'Thereafter Patrick went at sunrise to the well, namely Cliabach on the sides of Cruachan. The clerics sat down by the well. Two daughters of Loegaire son

of Niall went early to the well to wash their hands, as was a custom of theirs, namely, Ethne the Fair, and Fedelm the Ruddy. The maidens found beside the well the assembly of the clerics in white garments, with their books before them. And they wondered at the shape of the clerics, and thought that they were men of the elves or apparitions. They asked tidings of Patrick: “Whence are ye, and whence have ye come? Are ye of the elves or of the gods?” And Patrick said to them: “It were better for you to believe in God than to inquire about our race.” Said the girl who was elder: “Who is your god? and where is he? Is he in heaven, or in earth, or under earth, or on earth? Is he in seas or in streams, or in mountains or in glens? Hath he sons and daughters? Is there gold and silver, is there abundance of every good thing in his kingdom? Tell us about him, how he is seen, how he is loved, how he is found? if he is in youth, or if he is in age? if he is ever-living; if he is beautiful? if many have fostered his son? if his daughters are dear and beautiful to the men of the world?”<sup>518</sup>

And in another place it is recorded that ‘Patrick went to the well of Findmag. Slán is its name. They told Patrick that the heathen honoured the well as if it were a god.’<sup>519</sup> And of the same well it is said, ‘that the magi, i.e. wizards or Druids, used to reverence the well Slán and “offer gifts to it as if it were a god.”’<sup>519</sup> As Whitley Stokes pointed out, this is the only passage connecting the Druids with well-worship; and it is very important, because it establishes the relation between the Druids as magicians and their control of spirits like fairies.<sup>519</sup> As shown here, and as seems evident in Columba’s relation with Druids and exorcism in Adamnan’s *Life of St. Columba*,<sup>520</sup> the early Celtic peoples undoubtedly drew many of their fairy-traditions from a memory of druidic rites of divination. Perhaps the most beautiful description of a holy well and a description illustrative of such divination is that of Ireland’s most mystical well, Connla’s Well: —‘Sinend, daughter of Lodan Lucharglan, son of Ler, out of Tír Tairngire (“Land of Promise, Fairyland”), went to Connla’s Well which is under sea, to behold it. That is a well at which are the hazels and inspirations (?) of wisdom, that is, the hazels of the science of poetry, and in the same hour their fruit, and their blossom and their foliage break forth, and these fall on



the well in the same shower, which raises on the water a royal surge of purple. Then the [sacred] salmon chew the fruit, and the juice of the nuts is apparent on their purple bellies. And seven streams of wisdom spring forth and turn there again.’<sup>521</sup>

To these cults of sacred waters numerous non-Celtic parallels could easily be offered, but they seem unnecessary with Celtic evidence so clear. And this evidence which is already set forth shows that the origin of worship paid to sacred wells, fountains, lakes, or rivers, is to be found in the religious practices of the Celts before they became christianized. They believed that certain orders of spirits, often called fairies, and to be identified with them, inhabited, or as was the case with Sinend, who came from the Otherworld, visited these places, and must be appeased or approached through sacrifice by mortals seeking their favours. Canon Mahé puts the matter thus:—‘The Celts recognized a supreme God, the principle of all things; but they rendered religious worship to the genii or secondary deities who, according to them, united themselves to different objects in nature and made them divine by such union. Among the objects were rivers, the sea, lakes and fountains.’<sup>522</sup>

## **The Cult of Sacred Trees**

The things said of sacred waters can also be said of sacred trees among the Celts; and, in the case of sacred trees, more may be added about the Druids and their relation to the Fairy-Faith, for it is well known that the Druids held the oak and its mistletoe in great religious veneration, and it is generally thought that most of the famous Druid schools were in the midst of sacred oak-groves or forests. Pliny has recorded that ‘the Druids, for so they call their magicians, have nothing which they hold more sacred than the mistletoe<sup>523</sup> and the tree on which it grows, provided only it be an oak (*robur*). But apart from that, they select groves of oak, and they perform no sacred rite without leaves from that tree, so that the Druids may be regarded as even deriving from it their name interpreted as Greek’<sup>524</sup> (a disputed

point among modern philologists). Likewise of the Druids, Maximus Tyrius states that the image of their chief god, considered by him to correspond to Zeus, was a lofty oak tree;<sup>525</sup> and Strabo says that the principal place of assembly for the Galatians, a Celtic people of Asia Minor, was the Sacred Oak-grove.<sup>526</sup>

Just as the cult of fountains was absorbed by Christianity, so was the cult of trees. Concerning this, Canon Mahé writes:—‘One sees sometimes, in the country and in gardens, trees wherein, by trimming and bending together the branches, have been formed niches of verdure, in which have been placed crosses or images of certain saints. This usage is not confined to the Morbihan. Our Lady of the Oak, in Anjou, and Our Lady of the Oak, near Orthe, in Maine, are places famous for pilgrimage. In this last province, says a historian, “One sees at various cross-roads the most beautiful rustic oaks decorated with figures of saints. There are seen there, in five or six villages, chapels of oaks, with whole trunks of that tree enshrined in the wall, beside the altar. Such among others is that famous chapel of Our Lady of the Oak, near the forge of Orthe, whose celebrity attracts daily, from five to six leagues about, a very great gathering of people.”’<sup>527</sup>

Saint Martin, according to Canon Mahé, tried to destroy a sacred pine-tree in the diocese of Tours by telling the people there was nothing divine in it. The people agreed to let it be cut down on condition that the saint should receive its great trunk on his head as it fell; and the tree was not cut down.<sup>527</sup> Saint Germain caused a great scandal at Auxerre by hanging from the limbs of a sacred tree the heads of wild animals which he had killed while hunting.<sup>527</sup> Saint Gregory the Great wrote to Brunehaut exhorting him to abolish among his subjects the offering of animals’ heads to certain trees.<sup>528</sup>

In Ireland fairy trees are common yet; though throughout Celtdom sacred trees, naturally of short duration, are almost forgotten. In Brittany, the Forest of Brocéliande still enjoys something of the old veneration, but more out of sentiment than by actual worship. A curious survival of an ancient Celtic tree-cult exists in Carmarthen, Wales, where there is still

carefully preserved and held upright in a firm casing of cement the decaying trunk of an old oak-tree called Merlin's Oak; and local prophecy declares on Merlin's authority that when the tree falls Carmarthen will fall with it. Perhaps through an unconscious desire on the part of some patriotic citizens of averting the calamity by inducing the tree-spirit to transfer its abode, or else by otherwise hoodwinking the tree-spirit into forgetting that Merlin's Oak is dead, a vigorous and now flourishing young oak has been planted so directly beside it that its foliage embraces it. And in many parts of modern England, the Jack-in-the-Green, a man entirely hidden in a covering of green foliage who dances through the streets on May Day, may be another example of a very ancient tree (or else agricultural) cult of Celtic origin.

### **The Cult of Fairies, Spirits, and the Dead**

There was also, as we already know, more or less of direct worship offered to fairies like the Tuatha De Danann; and sacrifice was made to them even as now, when the Irish or Scotch peasant pours a libation of milk to the 'good people' or to the fairy queen who presides over the flocks. In *Fiacc's Hymn*<sup>529</sup> it is said, 'On Ireland's folk lay darkness: the tribes worshipped elves: They believed not the true godhead of the true Trinity.' And there is a reliable legend concerning Columbkille which shows that this old cult of elves was not forgotten among the early Irish Christians, though they changed the original good reputation of these invisible beings to one of evil. It is said that Columbkille's first attempts to erect a church or monastery on Iona were rendered vain by the influence of some evil spirit or else of demons; for as fast as a wall was raised it fell down. Then it was revealed to the saint that the walls could not stand until a human victim should be buried alive under the foundations. And the lot fell on Oran, Columbkille's companion, who accordingly became a sacrifice to appease the evil spirit, fairies, or demons of the place where the building was to be raised.<sup>530</sup>

As an illustration of what the ancient practice of such sacrifice to place-spirits, or to gods, must have been like in Wales, we offer the following curious legend concerning the conception of Myrddin (Merlin), as told by our witness from Pontrhydfendigaid, Mr. John Jones (see p. 147):—‘When building the Castle of Gwrtheyrn, near Carmarthen, as much as was built by day fell down at night. So a council of the *Dynion Hysbys* or “Wise Men” was called, and they decided that the blood of a fatherless boy had to be used in mixing the mortar if the wall was to stand. Search was thereupon made for a fatherless boy (cf. p. 351), and throughout all the kingdom no such boy could be found. But one day two boys were quarrelling, and one of them in defying the other wanted to know what a fatherless boy like him had to say to him. An officer of the king, overhearing the quarrel, seized the boy thus tauntingly addressed as the one so long looked for. The circumstances were made known to the king, and the boy was taken to him. “Who is your father?” asked the king. “My mother never told me,” the boy replied. Then the boy’s mother was sent for, and the king asked her who the father of the boy was, and she replied: “I do not know; for I have never known a man. Yet, one night, it seemed to me that a man noble and majestic in appearance slept with me, and I awoke to find that I had been in a dream. But when I grew pregnant afterwards, and this wonderful boy whom you now see was delivered, I considered that a divine being or an angel had visited me in that dream, and therefore I called his child Myrddin the Magician, for such I believe my son to be.” When the mother had thus spoken, the king announced to the court and wise men, “Here is the fatherless boy. Take his blood and use it in mixing the mortar. The walling will not hold without it.” At this, Myrddin taunted the king and wise men, and said they were no better than a pack of idiots. “The reason the walling falls down,” Myrddin went on to say, “is because you have tried to raise it on a rock which covers two large sea-serpents. Whenever the wall is raised over them its weight presses on their backs and makes them uneasy. Then during the night they upheave their backs to relieve themselves of the pressure, and thus shake the walling to a fall.”’ The story ends here, but

presumably Merlin's statements were found to be true; and Merlin was not sacrificed, for, as we know, he became the great magician of Arthur's court.

There are two hills in the Highlands of Aberdeenshire where travellers had to propitiate the banshee by placing barley-meal cakes near a well on each hill; and if the traveller neglected the offering, death or some dire calamity was sure to follow.<sup>531</sup> It is quite certain that the banshee is almost always thought of as the spirit of a dead ancestor presiding over a family, though here it appears more like the tutelary deity of the hills. But sacrifice being thus made, according to the folk-belief, to a banshee, shows, like so many other examples where there is a confusion between divinities or fairies and the souls of the dead, that ancestral worship must be held to play a very important part in the complex Fairy-Faith as a whole. A few non-Celtic parallels determine this at once. Thus, exactly as to fairies here, milk is offered to the souls of saints in the Panjab, India, as a means of propitiating them.<sup>532</sup> M. A. Lefèvre shows that the Roman Lares, so frequently compared to house-haunting fairies, are in reality quite like the Gaelic banshee; that originally they were nothing more than the unattached souls of the dead, akin to Manes; that time and custom made distinctions between them; that in the common language Lares and Manes had synonymous dwellings; and that, finally, the idea of death was little by little divorced from the worship of the Lares, so that they became guardians of the family and protectors of life.<sup>533</sup> On all the tombs of their dead the Romans inscribed these names: *Manes, inferi, silentes*,<sup>534</sup> the last of which, meaning *the silent ones*, is equivalent to the term 'People of Peace' given to the fairy-folk of Scotland.<sup>535</sup> Nor were the Roman Lares always thought of as inhabiting dwellings. Many were supposed to live in the fields, in the streets of cities, at cross-roads, quite like certain orders of fairies and demons; and in each place these ancestral spirits had their chapels and received offerings of fruit, flowers, and of foliage. If neglected they became spiteful, and were then known as Lemures.

All these examples tend to show what the reviewer of Curtin's *Tales of the Fairies and of the Ghost World* states, that 'The attributes of a ghost—that is to say, the spirit of a dead man—are indistinguishable from those of a

fairy. And it is well known how world-wide is the worship of the dead and the offering of food to them, among uncivilized tribes like those of Africa, Australia, and America, as well as among such great nations as China, Corea, India, and Japan; and in ancient times it was universal among the masses of the people in Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

## **Celtic and Non-Celtic Feasts of the Dead**

*Samain*, as we already know, was the great Celtic feast of the dead when offerings or sacrifice of various kinds were made to ancestral spirits, and to the Tuatha De Danann and the spirit-hosts under their control; and *Beltene*, or the first of May, was another day anciently dedicated to fêtes in honour of the dead and fairies. Chapter ii has shown us how November Eve, the modern *Samain*, and like it, All Saints Eve or *La Toussaint*, are regarded among the Celtic peoples now; and the history of *La Toussaint* seems to indicate that Christianity, as in the case of the cult of trees and fountains, absorbed certain Celtic cults of the dead which centred around the pagan *Samain* feast of the dead, and even adopted the date of *Samain* (see p. 453).

Among the ancient Egyptians, so much like the ancient Celts in their innate spirituality and clear conceptions of the invisible world, we find a parallel feast which fell on the seventeenth *Athyr* of the year. This day was directly dependent upon the progress of the sun; and, as we have throughout emphasized, the ancient symbolism connected with the yearly movements of the Great God of Light and Life cannot be divorced from the ancient doctrines of life and death. To the pre-Christian Celts, the First of November, or the Festival of *Samain*, which marked the end of summer and the commencement of winter, was symbolical of death.<sup>536</sup> *Samain* thus corresponds with the Egyptian fête of the dead, for the seventeenth *Athyr* of the year marks the day on which Sîtou (the god of darkness) killed in the midst of a banquet his brother Osiris (the god of light, the sun), and which was therefore thought of as the season when the old sun was dying of his wounds. It was a time when the power of good was on the decline, so that

all nature, turning against man, was abandoned to the divinities of darkness, the inhabitants of the Realms of the Dead. On this anniversary of the death of Osiris, an Egyptian would undertake no new enterprise: should he go down to the Nile, a crocodile would attack him as the crocodile sent by Sîtou had attacked Osiris, and even as the Darkness was attacking the Light to devour it;<sup>537</sup> should he set out on a journey, he would part from his home and family never to return. His only course was to remain locked in his house, and there await in fear and inaction the passing of the night, until Osiris, returning from death, and reborn to a new existence, should rise triumphant over the forces of Darkness and Evil.<sup>538</sup> It is clear that this last part of the Egyptian belief is quite like the Celtic conception of *Samain* as we have seen Ailill and Medb celebrating that festival in their palace at Cruachan.

There is a great resemblance between the christianized Feast of *Samain*, when the dead return to visit their friends and to be entertained, for example as in Brittany, and the beautiful festivals formerly held in the Sînto temples of Japan. Thus at Nikko thousands of lanterns were lighted, 'each one representing the spirit of an ancestor,' and there was masquerading and revelry for the entertainment of the visiting spirits.<sup>539</sup> It shows how much religions are alike.

Each year the Roman peoples dedicated two days (February 21–2) to the honouring of the Dead. On the first day, called the *Feralia*, all Romans were supposed to remain within their own homes. The sanctuaries of all the gods were closed and all ceremony suspended. The only sacrifices made at such a time were to the dead, and to the gods of the dead in the underworld; and all manes were appeased by food-offerings of meats and cakes. The second day was called *Cara Cognatio* and was a time of family reunions and feasting. Of it Ovid has said (*Fasti*, ii. 619), 'After the visit to the tombs and to the ancestors who are no longer [among us], it is pleasant to turn towards the living; after the loss of so many, it is pleasant to behold those who remain of our blood and to reckon up the generations of our descendants.' And the Greeks also had their feasts for the dead.<sup>540</sup>

## Conclusion

The fact of ancient Celtic cults of stones, waters, trees, and fairies still existing under cover of Christianity directly sustains the Psychological Theory; and the persistence of the ancient Celtic cult of the dead, as illustrated in the survival of *Samain* in its modern forms, and perhaps best seen now among the Bretons, goes far to sustain the opinion of Ernest Renan, who declared in his admirable *Essais* that of all peoples the Celts, as the Romans also recorded, have most precise ideas about death. Thus it is that the Celts at this moment are the most spiritually conscious of western nations. To think of them as materialists is impossible. Since the time of Patrick and Columba the Gaels have been the missionaries of Europe; and, as Caesar asserts, the Druids were the ancient teachers of the Gauls, no less than of all Britain. And the mysteries of life and death are the key-note of all things really Celtic, even of the great literature of Arthur, Cuchulainn, and Finn, now stirring the intellectual world.

## Chapter X

### The Testimony of Christianity

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‘The Purgatory of St. Patrick became the framework of another series of tales, embodying the Celtic ideas concerning the other life and its different states. Perhaps the profoundest instinct of the Celtic peoples is their desire to penetrate the unknown. With the sea before them, they wish to know what is to be found beyond it; they dream of the Promised Land. In the face of the unknown that lies beyond the tomb, they dream of that great journey which the pen of Dante has celebrated.’—Ernest Renan.



Lough Derg a sacred lake originally—Purgatorial rites as christianized survivals of ancient Celtic rites—Purgatory as Fairyland—Purgatorial rites parallel to pagan initiation ceremonies—The Death and Resurrection Rite—Breton Pardons compared—Relation to Aengus Cult and Celtic cave-temples—Origin of Purgatorial doctrine pre-Christian—Celtic and Roman feasts of dead shaped Christian ones—Fundamental unity of Mythologies, Religions, and the Fairy-Faith.

The best evidence offered by Christianity with direct bearing on the Fairy-Faith comes from what may be designated survivals of transformed paganism within the Church itself. Various pagan cults, which also came to be more or less christianized, have been considered under Paganism; and in this chapter we propose to examine the famous Purgatory of St. Patrick and the Christian rites in honour of the dead.

### **St. Patrick's Purgatory**

In the south of County Donegal, in Ireland, amid treeless mountains and moorlands, lies Lough Derg or the Red Lake, containing an island which has long been famous throughout Christendom as the site of St. Patrick's Purgatory. Even to-day more than in the Middle Ages it is the goal of thousands of pious pilgrims who repair thither to be purified of the accumulated sins of a lifetime. In this age of commercialism the picture is an interesting and a happy one, no matter what the changing voices of the many may have to say about it.

The following weird legends, which during the autumn of 1909 I found surviving among the Lough Derg peasantry, explain how the lough received its present name, and seem to indicate that long before Patrick's time the lough was already considered a strange and mysterious place, apparently an Otherworld preserve. The first legend, based on two complementary

versions, one from James Ryan, of Tamlach Townland, who is seventy-five years old, the other from Arthur Monaghan, a younger man, who lives about three miles from James Ryan, is as follows:—‘In his flight from County Armagh, Finn Mac Coul took his mother on his shoulder, holding her by the legs, but so rapidly did he travel that on reaching the shores of the lake nothing remained of his mother save the two legs, and these he threw down there. Some time later, the Fenians, while searching for Finn, passed the same spot on the lake-shore, and Cinen Moul(?), who was of their number, upon seeing the shin-bones of Finn’s mother and a worm in one, said: “If that worm could get water enough it would come to something great.” “I’ll give it water enough,” said another of the followers, and at that he flung it into the lake (later called Finn Mac Coul’s lake).<sup>541</sup> Immediately the worm turned into an enormous water-monster. This water-monster it was that St. Patrick had to fight and kill; and, as the struggle went on, the lake ran red with the blood of the water-monster, and so the lake came to be called Loch Derg (Red Lake).’ The second legend, composed of folk-opinions, was related by Patrick Monaghan, the caretaker of the Purgatory, as he was rowing me to Saints’ Island—the site of the original purgatorial cave; and this legend is even more important for us than the preceding one:—‘I have always been hearing it said that into this lough St. Patrick drove all the serpents from Ireland, and that with them he had here his final battle, gaining complete victory. The old men and women in this neighbourhood used to believe that Lough Derg was the last stronghold of the Druids in Ireland; and from what I have heard them say, I think the old legend means that this is where St. Patrick ended his fight with the Druids, and that the serpents represent the Druids or paganism.’

These and similar legends, together with what we know about the purgatorial rites, lead us to believe that in pre-Christian times Finn Mac Coul’s Lake, later called Lough Derg, was venerated as sacred, and that the cave which then undoubtedly existed on Saints’ Island was used as a centre for the celebration of pagan mysteries similar in character to those supposed to have been celebrated in New Grange. Evidently, in the ordeals and ceremonies of the modern Christian Purgatory of St. Patrick, we see the

survivals of such pagan initiatory rites. Just as the cults of stones, trees, fountains, lakes, and waters were absorbed by the new religion, so, it would seem, were all cults rendered in prehistoric times to Finn Mac Coul's Lake and within the island cave. Though the present location of the Purgatory is not the original place of the old Celtic cults, there having been a transfer from Saints' Island to Station Island, the present place of pilgrimage, where instead of the cave there is the 'Prison Chapel', the practices, though naturally much modified and corrupted, retain their primitive outlines. Patrick in his time ordered the observance of the following ceremonies by all penitents before their entrance into the original cave on Saints' Island;<sup>542</sup> and for a long time they were strictly carried out:—'The visitor must first go to the bishop of the diocese, declare to him that he came of his own free will, and request of him permission to make the pilgrimage. The bishop warned him against venturing any further in his design, and represented to him the perils of his undertaking; but if the pilgrim still remained steadfast in his purpose, he gave him a commendatory letter to the prior of the island. The prior again tried to dissuade him from his design by the same arguments that had been previously urged by the bishop. If, however, the pilgrim still remained steadfast, he was taken into the church to spend there fifteen days in fasting and praying. After this the mass was celebrated, the holy communion administered to him and holy water sprinkled over him, and he was led in procession with reading of litanies to the entrance of the purgatory, where a third attempt was made to dissuade him from entering. If he still persisted, the prior allowed him to enter the cave, after he had received the benediction of the priests, and, in entering, he commended himself to their prayers, and made the sign of the cross on his forehead with his own hand. The prior then made fast the door, and opened it not again till the next morning, when, if the penitent were there, he was taken out and led with great joy to the church, and, after fifteen days' watching and praying, was dismissed. If he was not found when the door was opened, it was understood that he had perished in his pilgrimage through purgatory; the door was closed again, and he was never afterwards mentioned'.

An enormous mass of literary and historical material was recorded during the mediaeval period, in various European vernaculars and in Latin, concerning St. Patrick's Purgatory; and all of it testifies to the widespread influence of the rites which already then as now attracted thousands of pilgrims from all parts of Christendom. In the poem of *Owayne Miles*,<sup>543</sup> which forms part of this material, we find a poetical description of the purgatorial initiatory rites quite comparable to Virgil's account of Aeneas on his initiatory journey to Hades. The poem records how Sir Owain was locked in the cave, and how, after a short time, he began to penetrate its depths. He had but little light, and this by degrees disappeared, leaving him in total darkness. Then a strange twilight appeared. He went on to a hall and there met fifteen men clad in white and with heads shaven after the manner of ecclesiastics. One of them told Owain what things he would have to suffer in his pilgrimage, how unclean spirits would attack him, and by what means he could withstand them. Then the fifteen men left the knight alone, and soon all sorts of demons and ghosts and spirits surrounded him, and he was led on from one torture and trial to another by different companies of fiends. (In the original Latin legend there were four fields of punishment.) Finally Owain came to a magic bridge which appeared safe and wide, but when he reached the middle of it all the fiends and demons and unclean spirits raised so horrible a yell that he almost fell into the chasm below. He, however, reached the other shore, and the power of the devils ceased. Before him was a celestial city, and the perfumed air which was wafted from it was so ravishing that he forgot all his pains and sorrows. A procession came to Owain and, welcoming him, led him into the paradise where Adam and Eve dwelt before they had eaten the apple. Food was offered to the knight, and when he had eaten of it he had no desire to return to earth, but he was told that it was necessary to live out his natural life in the world and to leave his flesh and bones behind him before beginning the heavenly existence. So he began his return journey to the cave's entrance by a short and pleasant way. He again passed the fifteen men clad in white, who revealed what things the future had in store for him; and reaching the

door safely, waited there till morning. Then he was taken out, congratulated, and invited to remain with the priests for fifteen days.<sup>544</sup>

Here we have clearly enough many of the essential features of the underworld: there is the mystic bridge which when crossed guarantees the traveller against evil spirits, just as in Ireland a peasant believes himself safe when fairies are pursuing him if he can only cross a bridge or stream. The celestial city is both like the Christian Heaven and the *Sidhe* world. The eating of angel food by Owain has an effect quite like that of eating food in Fairyland; but Owain, by Christian influence, is sent back on earth to die ‘that death which the King of Heaven and Earth hath ordained,’ as Patrick said of the prince whom he saved from the *Sidhe*-folk.<sup>545</sup>

A curious story, in which King Arthur himself is made to visit St. Patrick’s Purgatory, published during the sixteenth century by a learned Frenchman, Stephanus Forcatulus, shows how real a relation there is between Purgatory and the Greek or Roman Hades. Arthur, it is said, leaving the light behind him, descended into the cave by a rough and steep road. ‘For they say that this cave is an entrance to the shades, or at least to purgatory, where poor sinners may get their offences washed out, and return again rejoicing to the light of day.’ But Forcatulus adds that ‘I have learnt from certain serious commentaries of Merlin, that Gawain, his master of horse, called Arthur back, and dissuaded him from examining further the horrid cave in which was heard the sound of falling water which emitted a sulphureous smell, and of voices lamenting as it were for the loss of their bodies’.<sup>546</sup>

### **Purgatorial and Initiatory Rites**

Judging from the above data and from the great mass of similar data available, the religious rites connected with St. Patrick’s Purgatory are to be anthropologically interpreted in the light of what is known about ancient and modern initiatory ceremonies, similarly conducted. As has already been stated, the original Purgatory which was in a cave on Saints’ Island is to-

day typified by 'Prison Chapel' on Station Island; and in this 'Prison Chapel', as formerly in the cave, pilgrims, after having fasted and performed the necessary preparatory penances, are required to pass the night. Among the Greeks, neophytes seeking initiation, after similar preparation, entered the cave-shrine recently discovered at Eleusis, the site of the Great Mysteries, and therein, in the *sanctum sanctorum*, entered into communion with the god and goddess of the lower world;<sup>547</sup> whereas in the original Purgatory Sir Owain and Arthur are described as having come into contact with the Hades-world and its beings. In the state cult at Acharaca, Greece, there was another cavern-temple in which initiations were conducted.<sup>547</sup> The oracle of Zeus Trophonius was situated in a subterranean chamber, into which, after various preparatory rites, including the invocation of Agamedes, neophytes descended to receive in a very mysterious manner the divine revelations which were afterwards interpreted for them. So awe-inspiring were the descent into the cave and the sights therein seen that it was popularly believed that no one who visited the cave ever smiled again; and persons of grave and serious aspect were proverbially said to have been in the cave of Trophonius.<sup>548</sup>

The worship of Mithras, the Persian god of created light and all earthly wisdom, who in time became identified with the sun, was conducted in natural and artificial caves found in every part of the Roman Empire where his cult flourished until superseded by Christianity; and in these caves very elaborate initiations of seven degrees were carried out. The cave itself signified the lower world, into which during the ordeals of initiation the neophyte was supposed to enter while out of the physical body, that the soul might be purged by many trials.<sup>549</sup> In Mexico the cavern of Chalchatongo led to the plains of paradise, evidently through initiations; and Mictlan, a subterranean temple, similarly led to the Aztec land of the dead.<sup>550</sup>

Among the most widespread and characteristic features of contemporary primitive races we find highly developed mysteries (puberty institutions) of the same essential character as these ancient mysteries. They are to uncivilized youth what the Greek Mysteries were to Greek youth, and what colleges and universities are to the youth of Europe and America,

though perhaps more successful than these last as places of moral and religious instruction. These mysteries vary from tribe to tribe, though in almost all of them there is what corresponds to the Death Rite in Freemasonry; that is to say, there is either a symbolical presentation of death in a sacred drama—as there was among the Greeks in their complete initiatory rites—or a state of actual trance imposed upon each neophyte by the priestly initiators. The *sanctum sanctorum* of these primitive mysteries is sometimes in a natural or artificial cavern (as was the rule with respect to the Ancient Mysteries and St. Patrick's Purgatory on Saints' Island); sometimes in a structure specially prepared to exclude the light; or else the neophytes are symbolically or literally buried in an underground place to be resurrected greatly purified and strengthened.<sup>551</sup> And the mystic purification at the sea-shore and spiritual re-birth sought in the cave at Eleusis by the highly cultured Athenians and their fellow Greeks, or among other cultured and uncultured ancient and modern peoples through some corresponding initiation ceremony, find their parallel in the purification and spiritual re-birth still sought in the Christian Purgatory, now 'Prison Chapel', and in the lake waters, amid the solitude of sacred Lough Derg, Ireland, by thousands of earnest pilgrims from all parts of the world.<sup>552</sup>

There is a correspondence between this conclusion and what was said about the initiatory aspects of the Aengus Cult; and should we try to connect the Purgatory with some particular sun-cult of a character parallel to that of the Aengus Cult we should probably have to name Lug, the great Irish sun-god, because of the significant fact that the purgatorial rites on Station Island come to an end on the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the 15th of August, a date which apparently coincides sufficiently to represent, as it probably does, the ancient August Lughnasadh, the 1st of August, a day sacred to the sun-god Lug, as the name indicates.<sup>553</sup>

If we are to class together the original Purgatory, New Grange, Gavrinis, and other Celtic underground places, as centres of the highest religious practices in the past, we should expect to discover that many similar structures or natural caverns existed in pagan Ireland, as indeed we find they did. Thus in different Irish manuscripts various caves are

mentioned,<sup>554</sup> and most of them, so far as they can be localized, are traditionally places of supernatural marvels, and often (as in the case of the last one enumerated, the Cave of Cruachan) are directly related to the under-world.<sup>555</sup> Another of these caves is described as being under a church, which circumstance suggests that the church was dedicated over an underground place originally sacred to pagan worship, and, as we may safely assume, to pagan mysteries.

The curious custom among early Irish Christians, of retiring for a time to a cave, seems to show the lasting into historical times of the pagan cave-ritual now surviving at Lough Derg only. The custom seems to have been common among the saints of Britain and of Scotland;<sup>556</sup> and in Stokes's *Tripartite Life of Patrick* (p. 242) there is a very significant reference to it. In the *Mabinogion* story of *Kulhwch and Olwen* there seems to be another traditional echo of the times when caves were used for religious rites or worship, in the author's reference to the cave of the witch Orddu as being 'on the confines of Hell'. A cave was thus popularly supposed to lead to Hades or an underworld of fairies, demons, and spirits; again just as in St. Patrick's Purgatory. Purely Celtic instances of this kind might be greatly multiplied.

### **Pagan Origin of Purgatorial Doctrine**

The metrical romance of *Orfeo and Herodys* in Ritson's *Collection of Metrical Romances*<sup>557</sup> illustrates how in Britain (and Britain—even England—is more Celtic than Saxon) the Grecian Hell or Hades was looked on as identical with the Celtic Fairyland. This is quite unusual; and for us is highly significant. It shows that in Britain, at the time the romance was written, there was no essential difference between the underworld of fairies and the underworld of shades. Pluto's realm and the realm where fairy kings and fairy queens held high revelry were the same. The difference is this: Hades was an Egyptian and in turn a Greek conception, while Fairyland was a Celtic conception; they differ as the imagination at work on a



philosophical doctrine differs among the three peoples, and not otherwise. And, as Wright has shown, the origin of Purgatory in the Roman Church is very obscure. As to the location of Purgatory, Roman theology confesses it has nothing certain to say.<sup>558</sup> The natural conclusion, as we suggested in our study of Re-birth, would seem to be that the Irish doctrine of the Otherworld in all its aspects, but especially as the underground world of the *Sidhe* or fairy-folk, was combined with the pagan Graeco-Roman doctrine of Hades in St. Patrick's Purgatory, and hence gave rise to the modern Christian doctrine of Purgatory.

### **Christian Rites in Honour of the Departed**

We may now readily pass from an examination of world-wide rites concerned with death and re-birth, which are based on an ancient sun-cult, to an examination of their shadows in the theology of Christianity, where they are commonly known as the rites in honour of the departed. It seems to be clear at the outset that the Christian Fête in Commemoration of the Dead, according to its history, is an adaptation from paganism; and with so many Irish ecclesiastics, or else their disciples, educated in the Celtic monasteries of Britain and Ireland, having influence in the Church during the early centuries, there is a strong probability that the Feast of *Samain* had something to do with shaping the modern feast, as we have suggested in the preceding chapter; for both feasts originally fell on the first of November. Roman Catholic writers record that it was St. Odilon, Abbot of Cluny, who instituted in 998 in all his congregations the Fête in Commemoration of the Dead, and fixed its anniversary on the first of November; and that this fête was quickly adopted by all the churches of the East.<sup>559</sup> To-day in the Roman Church both the first and second of November are holy days devoted to those who have passed out of this life. The first day, the Fête of All the Saints (*La Toussaint*), is said to have originated thus: the Roman Pantheon—Pantheon meaning the residence of all the gods—was dedicated to Jupiter the Avenger, and when Christianity triumphed the pagan images

were overthrown, and there was thereupon originally established, in place of the cult of all the gods, the Fête of all the Saints.<sup>560</sup> Why *La Toussaint* should have become a feast of the dead would be difficult to say unless we admit the ancient Celtic feast of the dead as having amalgamated with it. This we believe is what took place; for if the Fête in Commemoration of the Dead was, as some authorities hold, established by St. Odilon to fall on the first of November, in direct accord with *Samain* or Halloween, then at some later period it was displaced by *La Toussaint*, for now it is celebrated on the second of November.

Likewise prayers and masses for the dead, which annually receive emphasis on the first two days of November, seem to have had their origin in pre-Christian cults. According to Mosheim, in his *Histoire ecclésiastique*,<sup>561</sup> the usage of celebrating the Sacrament at the tombs of martyrs and at funerals was introduced during the fourth century; and from this usage the masses for the saints and for the dead originated in the eighth century. Prior to the fourth century we find the newly converted Christians in all parts of Celtic Europe, and in many countries non-Celtic, still rendering a cult to ancestral spirits, making food offerings at the tombs of heroes, and strictly observing the very ancient November feast, or its equivalent, in honour of the dead and fairies. Then, very gradually, in the course of four centuries, the character of the Christian cults and feasts of the saints and of the dead seems to have been determined. The following citation will serve to illustrate the nature of Irish Christian rites in honour of the dead:—In the *Lebar Brecc*<sup>562</sup> we read: ‘There is nothing which one does on behalf of the soul of him who has died that doth not help it, both prayer on knees, and abstinence, and singing requiems, and frequent blessings. Sons are bound to do penance for their deceased parents. A full year, now, was Maedóc of Ferns, with his whole community, on water and bread, after loosing from hell the soul of Brandub son of Echaid.’

According to St. Augustine, the souls of the dead are solaced by the piety of their living friends when this expresses itself through sacrifice made by the Church;<sup>563</sup> St. Ephrem commanded his friends not to forget him after death, but to give proofs of their charity in offering for the repose

of his soul alms, prayers, and sacrifices, especially on the thirtieth day;<sup>563</sup> Constantine the Great wished to be interred under the Church of the Apostles in order that his soul might be benefited by the prayers offered to the saints, by the mystic sacrifice, and by the holy communion.<sup>563</sup> Such prayers and sacrifices for the dead were offered by the Church sometimes during thirty and even forty days, those offered on the third, the seventh, and the thirtieth days being the most solemn.<sup>564</sup> The history of the venerable Bede, the letters of St. Boniface, and of St. Lul prove that even in the ancient Anglican church prayers were offered up for the souls of the dead;<sup>565</sup> and a council of bishops held at Canterbury in 816 ordered that immediately after the death of a bishop there shall be made for him prayers and alms.<sup>565</sup> At Oxford, in 1437, All Souls College was founded, chiefly as a place in which to offer prayers on behalf of the souls of all those who were killed in the French wars of the fifteenth century.

## **Conclusion**

As seems to be evident from this and the two preceding chapters, all these fêtes, rites, or observances of Christianity have a relation more or less direct to paganism, and thus to ancient Celtic cults and sacrifice offered to the dead, to spirits, and to the Tuatha De Danann or Fairies. And the same set of ideas which operated among the Celts to create their Fairy-Mythology—ideas arising out of a belief in or knowledge of the one universal Realm of Spirit and its various orders of invisible inhabitants—gave the Egyptians, the Indians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Teutons, the Mexicans, the Peruvians, and all nations their respective mythologies and religions; and we moderns are literally ‘the heirs of all the ages’.

## **Section IV**

# **Modern Science and the Fairy Faith; And Conclusions<sup>566</sup>**

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## **Chapter XI**

# **Science and Fairies**

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‘Puzzling and weird occurrences have been vouched for among all nations and in every age. It is possible to relegate a good many asserted occurrences to the domain of superstition, but it is not possible thus to eliminate all.’—Sir Oliver Lodge.

Method of Examination: Exoteric and Esoteric Aspects—The X-quantity—Scientific Attitudes toward the Animistic Hypothesis: Materialistic Theory; Pathological Theory; Delusion and Imposture Theory—Problems of Consciousness: Dreams; Supernormal Lapse of Time—Psychical Research and Fairies: Myers’s Researches—Present Position of Psychical Research—Psychical Research and Anthropology in relation to Fairy-Faith, according to a special contribution from Mr. Andrew Lang—Final Testing of the X-quantity—Conclusion: the Celtic belief in Fairies and in Fairyland is scientific.

## **Method of Examination**

The promise made in the Introduction to examine the Why of the belief in fairies must now be fulfilled by calling in the aid of modern science. To adduce parallels when studying a religion or a mythology is worth doing, in order to show the fundamental bond which unites all systems of belief in things called spiritual; but it is more important to try to understand why there should be such parallels and such a unifying principle behind them. Perhaps there has been too much of a tendency among students of folk-lore, and of anthropology as a whole, to be content to do no more than to discover that the Eskimos in Greenland hold a belief in spirits parallel to a belief in spirits held in Central Africa, or that the Greek Pantheon (and possibly the Celtic one as well) consists of goddesses which are apparently pre-Aryan and of gods which are apparently Aryan. We, too, have drawn many parallels between the Celtic Fairy-Faith and the various fairy-faiths throughout the world; but now we should attempt to find out why there are animistic beliefs at all.

This chapter, then, will confine itself to a scientific examination of the more popular or, as it may be called, the exoteric aspect of the Fairy-Faith, which has come to us directly from the masses of the Celtic peoples. The following chapter, which is corollary to the present one, will deal especially with the mystical aspect or, as this may be called by contrast, the esoteric aspect of the same belief, which, in turn, has come to us from learned mystics and seers, who form, in proportion, but a very small minority of the modern Celts. Each of these complementary aspects of the Celtic religion undoubtedly has its origin in the remotest antiquity. This is probably more readily seen with respect to the former than to the latter. The latter has been esoteric always, and in our opinion shows an unbroken tradition (if only a very incomplete one) from druidic times; and it depends less upon written records, because the Druids had none, than upon oral transmission from age to age. Both aspects of the Fairy-Faith have in modern times absorbed many ideas from non-Celtic systems of religion and mystical thought. As Mr. Jenner has suggested in his Introduction for Cornwall, and as certain details in chapter ii clearly indicate, systems of modern theosophy have had a marked influence in this respect; but it is impossible for us to-day to say

what parts of the Fairy-Faith are purely Celtic and what are not so, because comparative studies prove that mysticism is fundamentally the same in all ages and among all peoples. It is psychologically true, also, that there must always exist some sort of affinity between two sets of thought in order for them to coalesce. Hence, if modern mysticism (derived from Oriental or other sources) has, as we believe, affected Celtic mysticism as handed down from the dim druidic ages, it is merely because the two occupy a common psychical territory. We must therefore be content to examine scientifically the Fairy-Faith as it now presents itself.

The analysis of evidence in chapter iii indicates clearly that there is in the exoteric part of the modern Celtic belief in fairies considerable degeneration from what must have been in pagan times a widespread and highly developed animistic creed. In the esoteric part of it there will be observed, instead of such degeneracy, a surprisingly elaborate system of the most subtle speculation, which parallels that of East Indian systems of metaphysics. If the belief be looked at in this comprehensive manner, it seems to be clear that to some extent at least, as has been pointed out already (pp. 99, 257), the Fairy-Faith in its purest form originated amongst the most highly educated and scientific Celts of ancient times rather than among their unlearned fellows. The two aspects of the belief form an harmonious whole as they will be presented in this Section IV. Chapter xi depends mostly upon the evidence set forth in chapter ii. Chapter xii depends mostly upon the evidence set forth in chapter vii.

In chapter iii we examined anthropologically the modern; and (both there and in parts of chapters following) the historical and ancient belief in fairies in Celtic countries, and found it to be in essence animistic. Folk-imagination, social psychology, anthropomorphism generally, adequately explained by far the greater mass of the evidence presented; but the animistic background of the belief in question presented problems which the strictly anthropological sciences are unable to solve. The point has now been reached when these problems must be presented to physiology and to psychology for solution. If they can be completely solved by purely rational

and physical data, then the Fairy-Faith as a whole will have to be cast aside as worthless in the eyes of science.

In our generation, however, such a casting aside is not to be the fate of the folk-religion of the Celts: the following phenomena recorded in chapter ii and elsewhere throughout our study, and designated as the x- or unknown quantity of the Fairy-Faith, cannot at the present time be satisfactorily explained by science: (1) Collective hallucinations and veridical hallucinations; (2) objects moving without contact; (3) raps and noises called ‘supernatural’; (4) telepathy; (5) seership and visions; (6) dream and trance states manifesting supernormal knowledge; (7) ‘mediumship’ or ‘spirit-possession’. Independently of our own Celtic data in their support, the first class of phenomena are supported by an enormous mass of good data scientifically collected; the second and third class are less well supported; telepathy is almost generally accepted as now being established; the last three classes are hypothetically accepted by many authorities in pathology, psychology, and psychical research.

### **Scientific Attitudes towards the Animistic Hypothesis**

Assertions similar to ours, that phenomena like these are incapable of being explained away by any known laws of orthodox science, have helped to bring about a marked division in the ranks of scientific workers. On one hand there are those scientists who deny the existence of anything not capable of being mathematically tested, weighed, dissected, or otherwise analysed in laboratories; on the other hand, there are their colleagues who, often in spite of previous bias toward materialism, have arrived at a personal conviction that an animistic view of man is more in harmony with their scientific experience than any other. Both schools include men eminent in all branches of biological sciences.

Midway between these contending schools are the psycho-physicists who maintain that man is a twofold being composed of a psychical and physical part. Some of them are inclined to favour animism, others are

unwilling to regard the psychical part of man as separable from the physical part. So the world of science is divided.

Under such chaotic conditions of science it is our right to accept one view or another, or to reject all views and use scientific data independently. There can be no final court of appeal in matters where opinion is thus divided, save the experience of coming generations. We are therefore content to state our own position and leave it to the future for rejection or acceptance, as the case may be. To attempt a critical examination of the thousand and one theories occupying the modern arena of scientific controversy about the essential nature of man is altogether beyond the scope of this work. We must, nevertheless, blaze a rough footpath through the jungle of scientific theories, and, at the outset, put on record our opposition to that school of scientific workers who deny to man a supersensuous constitution. Their theory, if carried out to its logical conclusion, is now essentially no different from Feuerbach's theory at a time when science was far less developed than it is to-day. He held that 'the object of sense, or the sensuous, alone is really true, and therefore truth, reality, and the sensible are one'.<sup>567</sup> To say that we know reality through sensual perception is an error, as all schools of scientists must nowadays admit. Nature is for ever illuding the senses; she masquerades in disguise until science tears away her mask. We must always adjust the senses to the world itself: where there are only vibrations in ether, man sees light; and in atmospheric vibrations he hears sound. We only know things through the way in which our senses react upon them. We sum up the world-problem by saying: 'consciousness does not exhaust its object, the world.'<sup>567</sup> Perceptibility and reality thus not being coincident, man and the universe remain an unsolved problem, despite the noisy shoutings of the materialist in his hermetically sealed and light-excluding case called sensual perceptions. Science admits that all her explanations of the universe are mere products of human understanding and perceptions by the physical senses: the universe of science is wholly a universe of phenomena, and behind phenomena, as no scientist would dare deny, there must be the noumena, the ultimate causes of all things, as to which science as yet offers no comprehensive hypothesis, much less an



answer. To consider the materialistic hypothesis as adequate to account for the residuum or x-quantity of the Fairy-Faith would not even be reasonable, and, incontestably, would not be scientific.

When scientists holding to the non-animistic view of life are driven from their now for the most part abandoned fortress built by German scientists of the last century, of whom Feuerbach was a type, they, in opposing the animists, occupy a more modernly equipped fortress called the Pathological Theory. This theory is that 'mediumship', telepathy, hallucinations, or the voluntary and involuntary exercise of any so-called 'psychical' faculties on the part of men and women, with the resulting phenomena, can be explained as due to abnormal and hence—according to its point of view—diseased states of the human organism, or to some derangement of bodily functions, leading to delusions resembling those of insanity, which by a sort of hypnosis telepathically induced may even affect researchers and lead them into erroneous conclusions. All scientists are in agreement with the Pathological Theory in so far as it rejects as unworthy of serious consideration all apparitions and abnormal phenomena save those observed by sane and healthy percipients under ordinary conditions. And, accordingly, whenever there can be shown in our percipients a diseased mental or psychical state, we must eliminate their testimony without argument. But since we have endeavoured to present no testimony from Celtic percipients who are not physically and psychically normal, the Pathological Theory at best can affect the x-quantity merely hypothetically.

The following admission in regard to visual and auditory hallucinations is here worth noting as coming from so thorough an exponent of materialistic psychology as M. Théodule Ribot:—'There must exist anatomical and physiological causes which would solve the problem, but unfortunately they are hidden from us.' Of these hidden causes, which he thinks create all psychical states of mind or consciousness called by him 'disease of personality', M. Ribot says:—'Our ignorance of the causes stops us short. The psychologist is here like the physician who has to deal with a disease in which he can make out only the symptoms. What physiological influences are they which thus alter the general tone of the organism,

consequently of the coenaesthesia, consequently too of the memory? Is it some condition of the vascular system? Or some inhibitory action, some arrest of function? We cannot say.’<sup>568</sup> And after six years of most careful experimentation, M. Charles Richet, Professor of Physiology in the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, reached this conclusion:—‘There exists in certain persons at certain moments a faculty of acquiring knowledge which has no *rapport* with our normal faculties of that kind.’<sup>569</sup> We seem to have here the last words of science touching the Pathological Theory.

When driven from their pathological stronghold, and they maintain that they have not been driven from it, the non-animists always find a safe way to cover their retreat by setting up the charge that all psychical phenomena are fraudulent or else due to delusion on the part of observers. In reply, psychical researchers readily admit that there is a large percentage of mere trickery, delusion, and imposture in observed ‘spirit’ phenomena; some of which is deliberate on the part of the ‘medium’ and some of which is apparently not consciously induced. Nevertheless, such investigators are not at all willing to say that there is nothing more than this. The Delusion and Imposture Theory will account for a very respectable proportion of these phenomena, but not for all of them, and theoretically we shall admit its application to the parallel phenomena attributed to fairies; though it must be acknowledged that ‘fairy’ phenomena are for the most part spontaneously exhibited rather than as in ‘Spiritualism’ set up through holding *séances*. Further, there are comparatively few ‘charmers’ or ‘wise men’—the fairy ‘mediums’ among the Celts—who ever make money out of their ability to deal with the ‘good people’, or *Tylwyth Teg*; whence the margin of encouragement for fraudulent production of ‘fairy’ phenomena is extremely limited when compared with ‘Spiritualism’.

After twenty-five years of experimentation, more or less continuous, with ‘mediums’, during which every conceivable test for the detection of fraud on their part was applied, William James put his conclusions on record in these words:—‘When imposture has been checked off as far as possible, when chance coincidence has been allowed for, when opportunities for normal knowledge on the part of the subject have been

noted, and skill in “fishing” and following clues unwittingly furnished by the voice or face of bystanders have been counted in, those who have the fullest acquaintance with the phenomena admit that in good mediums *there is a residuum of knowledge displayed* [italics are James’s own] that can only be called supernormal: the medium taps some source of information not open to ordinary people.’<sup>570</sup> Mr. Andrew Lang, one of the bravest of psychical researchers in England, not only would agree with William James in this, but, having carefully examined the Delusion and Imposture Theory from the more commanding point of view of an anthropologist, would go further and include classical spiritualistic phenomena as well as those existing among contemporary uncultured races. He says:—‘Meanwhile, the extraordinary similarity of savage and classical spiritualistic rites, with the corresponding similarity of alleged modern phenomena, raises problems which it is more easy to state than to solve. For example, such occurrences as “rappings”, as the movement of untouched objects, as the lights of the *séance* room, are all easily feigned. But that ignorant modern knaves should feign precisely the same raps, lights, and movements as the most remote and unsophisticated barbarians, and as the educated Platonists of the fourth century after Christ, and that many of the other phenomena should be identical in each case, is certainly noteworthy.’<sup>571</sup> Evidently, then, there is a large proportion of psychical and ‘fairy’ phenomena which remain unexplained even after the Delusion and Imposture Theory has been applied to such phenomena, and in all such cases we must look further for a scientific explanation.

## **Problems of Consciousness**

Our chief investigations will at first be directed more especially to the problems common both to psychology and to psychical research, namely, dream and trance states, hallucinations, and possessions, in order to show what bearings, if any, they have in the eyes of science upon parallel

phenomena said to be due to fairies, and set forth in chapter ii and anthropologically examined in chapter iii.

## **Dreams**

The popular opinion that dreams are nonsense is quite overthrown by definite psychological facts. When during sleep our sensory organs are exposed to external irritants the impressions physically produced are transmitted to the brain by the nervous system and react in dreams as they would in the waking state, except that the reactions in the two states of consciousness—the dream state and the waking state—differ in proportion as the two states differ; but in both the Ego is the real percipient.<sup>572</sup> Such stimuli as arise from after-theatre dinners, wine-parties, and so forth, produce a well-known type of dreams; and the same stimuli at the same period of time would produce an equal effect, though an altered one, to suit the altered psycho-physical conditions, if the waking state were active rather than the dream state, just as would all dreams which arise from pathological disturbances in disease, or abnormal physiological functions. This is evident from dreams of a morbid and sensual type, which directly affect the physical organism and its functions as parallel waking-states would. In all such dreams of the lower order, animal and purely physical tendencies, which are directly due to the state of the body, act very freely: an imperfectly balanced, temporarily deranged, or diseased organism must correspondingly respond to its driving forces. And it is clear from comparative study of phenomena that these lower kinds of dream states express only the lower or animal consciousness, which in most individuals is the predominant or only consciousness even in the waking life; and not the higher consciousness of the Ego or subconsciousness which may be expressed in somnambulism, for ‘in somnambulism there awakes an inner, second Ego’,<sup>573</sup> which is the Subliminal Self of Myers. Dr. G. F. Stout urges against Myers’s theory of the Subliminal Self that ‘the usual incoherence of dreams is an objection to regarding them as manifestations of a stream of

thought equal or superior in systematic complexity and continuity to that of the waking self',<sup>574</sup> which objection Myers also observed. But if we regard all dreams which are of the lower order as being due to the imperfect response of the body to its driving forces because of various bad physical conditions in the body, and recognize that these driving forces depend ultimately on the subconsciousness, the difficulty seems to be met by observing that under such conditions there is no real mergence of the normal consciousness into the subconsciousness. Hence ordinary dreams are within the ordinary spectrum of consciousness; but extra-ordinary dreams pass beyond the ordinary spectrum into the truly supernormal state of consciousness.

As all this indicates, dreams are of many classes: those of the lowest type, which we have explained as due to bad physiological conditions in the animal-man; those which are readily explainable as distorted reflections of waking actions, often based on some stray thought or suggestion of the day and then comparable to post-hypnotic suggestions. Other dreams are demonstrably entirely outside the range of ordinary mental or physical disturbances, actions, reflections, or suggestions of the waking life, and seem thus 'to have a wider purview, and to indicate that the record of external events which is kept within us is far fuller than we know'.<sup>575</sup> In some dreams there is reasoning as well as memory, and mathematicians have been known to solve problems in sleep: an American inventor known to the writer's mother asserted that he had dreamt out the details of a certain ice-manufacturing process which proved successful when tested; through self-suggestion set up in the waking state, R. L. Stevenson, upon entering the dream state, secured details for his imaginary romances.<sup>576</sup> Dr. Stout himself, in criticizing Myers's 'Subliminal Self', admits that 'in some very rare instances, a man has achieved, while dreaming, intellectual performances equalling or perhaps surpassing the best of which he was capable in waking life';<sup>577</sup> and there are many authentic cases of dream experiences which cannot possibly be explained as revivals of facts fallen out of the range of the ordinary memory or consciousness. We seem to be led to some hypothesis like this: in dreaming there is mental activity which

in the waking state is either functionless or else below the psycho-physical threshold of sensibility; because much that is subconscious in the non-dream state is in the dream state fully conscious. And we probably do not remember one quarter of our dreams: they belong to a mainly different order of consciousness.

Professor Freud's view of dreams coincides pretty generally with this view. He holds that the subconsciousness is the storehouse out of which dream contents are drawn and acted upon by the dream mind. Very much distortion of the subconscious material takes place in the process, due to what he calls the 'endopsychic censor'. In the waking state this censor is always on the alert to keep out of consciousness all subconscious processes or deposits, but in sleep the censor is less alert, and allows some subconscious content to escape over into the ordinary consciousness. The result is a dream distorted out of all recognition of its origin. Such a dream seems to occupy a position midway between what we have classed as the lowest or animal-mind dream and the highest or subliminal dream. It possibly shows an harmonious psycho-physical condition of the dream life, whereas the lowest type of dream shows the preponderance of the physical or animal, and the highest type of dream shows the preponderance of the psychical elements in man. Further, it may be designated as the normal dream, and the other two types respectively as the physically abnormal and the psychically abnormal.

Professor Freud detects other marked processes in the dream state, all of which help to illustrate the part of the Fairy-Faith dependent upon dreaming experiences. (1) There is condensation of details frequently in a proportion so great as one for ten and one for twenty; (2) displacement of details, or 'a transvaluation of all values'; (3) much dramatization; (4) regression, a retrograde movement of abstract mental processes toward their primary conceptions; and (5) secondary elaboration, an attempt to rationalize all dream-material.<sup>578</sup> Also, Professor Freud discovered from his analysis of thousands of dreams that the subconsciousness makes use of a sort of symbolism:—'This symbolism in part varies with the individual, but in part is of a typical nature, and seems to be identical with the symbolism which

we suppose to lie behind our myths and legends. It is not impossible that these latter creations of the people may find their explanation from the study of dreams.’<sup>579</sup> Such processes, taken as a whole, show that man possesses a twofold consciousness, the ordinary consciousness and the subconsciousness. And we have every reason to believe that subconscious activities go on continually, in waking and in sleeping.

By experiments on his own perfectly healthy children, Wienholt proved that there are natural forces existing whose stimulations are never perceived in waking life: he made passes over the face and neck of his son with an iron key at the distance of half an inch without touching him, whereupon the boy began to rub those parts and manifested uneasiness. Wienholt likewise experimented on his other children with lead, zinc, gold, and other metals, and in most cases the children ‘averted the parts so treated, rubbed them, or drew the clothes over them’.<sup>580</sup> Therefore, in sleep the consciousness perceives objects without physical contact; and this not inconceivably might suggest, inversely, that in sleep the human consciousness can affect objects without physical contact, as it is said fairies and the dead can, and in the way psychical researchers know that objects can be affected.

We have on record an account of a most remarkable dream quite the same in character as dreams wherein certain Celts believe they have met the dead or fairies. Professor Hilprecht had a broken Assyrian cylinder in cuneiform which he could not decipher; but in a dream an Assyrian priest in ancient garb appeared to him and deciphered the inscription. Of this dream Myers observed:—‘We seem to have reached the utmost intensity of sleep faculty within the limits of our ordinary spectrum.’<sup>581</sup>

We may sum up the results of our examination of dreams by saying that scientific analysis of the dream life *in its higher ranges* proves that our Ego is not wholly embraced in self-consciousness, that the Ego exceeds the self-consciousness. Instead of a continuity of consciousness which constitutes self-consciousness we have parallel states of consciousness for the one subject, the Ego. Our study of the Celtic theory of re-birth, in the following chapter, will further explain this subtle aspect of the dream psychology.

When such a conclusion is applied to the Fairy-Faith, the various dream-like or trance-like states during which ancient and contemporary Celts testify to having been in Fairyland are seen to be scientifically plausible. In this aspect then, Fairyland, stripped of all its literary and imaginative glamour and of its social psychology, in the eyes of science resolves itself into a reality, because it is one of the states of consciousness co-ordinate with the ordinary consciousness. This statement will be confirmed by a brief examination of what is called ‘supernatural lapse of time’, and which is invariably connected with Fairyland.

### **‘Supernatural’ Lapse of Time**

It has already been made clear that in the dream or somnambulant state there are invariably modifications of time and space relations; and these give rise to what has been termed the ‘supernatural lapse of time’. Two conditions are possible: either a few minutes of waking-state time equal long periods in the non-waking state; or else, as is usually the case in the Fairy-Faith, the reverse is true.

The first condition, which we shall examine first, occasionally appears in the Fairy-Faith through such a statement as this:—‘Sometimes one may thus go to Faerie for an hour or two’ (p. 39). Similarly, as physicians well know, patients under narcotics will experience events extending over long periods of time within a few minutes of normal time. De Quincey, the famous opium-eater, records dreams of ten to sixty years’ supernatural duration, and some quite beyond all limits of the waking experience. Fechner records a case of a woman who was nearly drowned and then resuscitated after two minutes of unconsciousness, and who in that time lived over again all her past life.<sup>582</sup> Another even more remarkable case than this last concerns Admiral Beaufort, who, having fallen into the water, was unconscious also for two minutes, and yet he says that not only during that short space of time did he travel over every incident of his life with the



details of ‘every minute and collateral feature’, but that there crowded into his imagination ‘many trifling events which had long been forgotten’.<sup>583</sup>

We shall now present examples to illustrate the second condition. Höhne was in an unbroken magnetic sleep from the first of January to the tenth of May, and when he came out of it he was overcome with surprise to see that spring had arrived, he having lain down—as he believed—only the day before.<sup>584</sup> Had Höhne been an Irishman, he might very reasonably have explained the situation by saying that he had been with the fairies for what seemed only a night. The Seeress of Prevorst, in a similar sleep, passed through a period of six years and five months, and then awoke as from a one-night sleep with no memory of what she did during that time; but some time afterwards memory of the period came to her so completely that she recalled all its details.<sup>585</sup> Old people, and some young people too, among the Celts, who go to Fairyland for varying periods of time, sometimes extending over weeks (as in a case I knew in West Ireland), have just such dreams or trance-states as this. Another example follows:—Chardel, in fleeing from the Revolution, took ship from Brittany and was obliged to induce somnambulism on his wife in order to overcome her horror of the sea. When the couple landed in America and Chardel awakened his wife, she had no recollection whatever of the Atlantic voyage, and believed herself still in Brittany.<sup>586</sup>

Both Helmholtz and Fechner show<sup>587</sup> that the functions of the nervous system are associated with a definite time-measure, so it follows that consciousness in an organic body like man’s depends upon the nervous system; but, as these examples and similar ones in the Fairy-Faith show, certain conscious states exist independently of the human nerves, and they therefore set up a strong presumption that complete consciousness can exist independently of the physical nerve-apparatus. And in proceeding to submit this presumption of a supersensuous consciousness to the further test of science we shall at the same time be testing the statements made by wholly reliable seer-witnesses, like the Irish mystic and seer (p. 65), that not only can men and women enter Fairyland during trance-states for a brief period, but that at death they can enter it for an unlimited period. Further, what is

for our study the most important of all statements will likewise be tested, namely, that in Fairyland there are conscious non-human entities like the *Sidhe* races.

## Psychical Research and Fairies

Our present task, then, is to extend the examination beyond incarnate consciousness into the realm of the new psychology or physical research, where, as a working hypothesis, it is assumed that there is discarnate consciousness, which by the Celtic peoples is believed to exist and to exhibit itself in various individual aspects as fairies.

As to what science demands as proof of the survival of human consciousness after death, there has been no clear consensus of opinion. To prove merely the existence of 'ghosts' would not do; it is necessary to show by a series of proofs (1) that discarnate intelligences exist, (2) that they possess complete and persistent personal energy wholly within themselves, (3) that they are the actual unit of consciousness and memory known to have manifested itself on this plane of existence through particular incarnate personalities now deceased. Various psychical researchers assert that they have already reached these proofs and are convinced, often in spite of their initial scientific attitude of antagonism toward all psychic phenomena, of the survival of the human consciousness after the death of the human body; and we shall proceed to present the testimony of some of them.

In chapter vii, concerning *Phantasms of the Dead*, forming part of Frederick W. H. Myers's *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, and in the two chapters which follow, on *Motor Automatism*, and on *Trance, Possession, and Ecstasy*, all the necessary proofs above noted have been adduced; and the author was thereby one of the very first psychical researchers to have recorded before the world his conversion from the non-animistic hypothesis to the ancient belief that Man is immortal; for he admits his conviction that the human consciousness does incontestably survive the decay of the physical body. Types of some of these well-attested and proved cases offered as evidence by Myers may be briefly summarized as follows:—Repeated apparitions indicating intimate acquaintance with some post-mortem fact like the place of burial; single apparitions with

knowledge of the affairs of surviving friends, or of the impending death of a survivor, or of spirits of persons dead after the apparition's decease; cases where professed spirits manifest knowledge of their earth-life, as of some secret compact made with survivors; cases of apparitional appearances near a corpse or a grave; occasional cases of the appearance of the dead to several persons collectively.<sup>588</sup> Under motor automatism, some of the most striking phenomena tending toward proof are cases where automatic writing has announced a death unknown to the persons present; knowledge communicated in a *séance*, not known to any person present, but afterwards proved to have been possessed by the deceased; automatic writing by a child in language unknown to her.

In chapter ix trance or possession is defined by Myers, in the same list of proofs, as 'a development of Motor Automatism resulting at last in a substitution of personality'; and this harmonizes with the theory of the control of a living organism by discarnate spirits, and is supported by an overwhelming mass of scientific experiment. Telepathy suggests the possibility of communication between the living and the living and between the living and the dead, and, we may add, between the dead and the dead—as in Fairyland—without the consideration of space or time as known in the lower ranges of mental action; and that the communication does not depend upon vibrations from a material brain-mass. Telepathy in these first two aspects has been likewise accepted as a scientific fact by workers in psychical research like Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, William James, and by many others. All such phenomena as these, now being so carefully investigated and weighed by men thoroughly trained in science, are, so to speak, the protoplasmic background of all religions, philosophies, or systems of mystical thought yet evolved on this planet; and in all essentials they confirm the x-quantity presented in the evidence of the Fairy-Faith.

Dr. G. F. Stout, an able representative of the school of non-converts to the theories in psychology propounded by Myers and by psychical research, states his position thus:—'But, at least, my doubt is not dogmatic denial, and I agree with Mr. Myers that there is no sufficient reason for being

peculiarly sceptical concerning communications from departed spirits. I also agree with him that the alleged cases of such communication cannot be with any approach to probability explained away as mere instances of telepathy.’<sup>589</sup> In addition, Dr. Stout says:—‘The conception which has been really useful to him is that of telepathy. Given that communication takes place between individual minds unmediated by ordinary physical conditions, we may regard intercourse with departed spirits as a special case of the same kind of process. And clairvoyance, precognition, &c., may perhaps be referred to telepathic communication either with departed spirits or with other intelligences superior to the human.’<sup>589</sup> In this last phrase, ‘intelligences superior to the human’, Dr. Stout assumes our own position, that hypothetically there is good reason for thinking that discarnate non-human intelligences—such as the Irish call the *Sidhe*—may exist and communicate with, or influence in some unknown way, the living, as during ‘mediumship’ and in ‘seership’.

Mr. Andrew Lang points out, in his reply to Dr. Stout’s criticism, that the only legitimate scientific resource for overthrowing Myers’s position, since the evidence is ‘mathematically incapable of explanation by chance coincidence’, is to say that several people are deliberate forgers and liars. And he adds:—‘To myself (but only to myself and a small circle) the evidence is irrefragable, from our lifetime knowledge of the percipient.’<sup>590</sup> But the animistic position does not by any means depend upon the evidence presented by Myers, no matter how incontestably reliable it is. We have only to examine the voluminous publications of the *Society for Psychical Research* (London) to realize this, and especially the *Report on the Census of Hallucinations of Modern Spiritualism*, by Professor Sidgwick’s Committee (*P.S. P. R.*, London).

## **Psychical Research and Anthropology in relation to the Fairy-Faith**

**According to a special contribution from Mr. Andrew Lang.**

Mr. Andrew Lang, who has done a special service to science by showing that psychical research is inseparably related to anthropology, has favoured us with a statement of his own position toward this relationship and has made it directly applicable to the Fairy-Faith. In a general way, but not in some important details (as indicated in our annotations) we agree with Mr. Lang's position, which he states as follows:—

Mr. Evans Wentz has asked me to define my position towards psychical research in relation to anthropology. I have done so in my book, *The Making of Religion*. The alleged abnormal or supernormal occurrences which psychical research examines are, for the most part, 'universally human,' and, whether they happen or do not happen, whether they are the results of malobservation, or of fraud, or are merely mythical, as *human* they cannot be wisely neglected by anthropology.

The fairy-folk, under many names, in many tongues, are everywhere objects of human belief, in Central Australia, in New Zealand, in the isles of the Pacific, as in the British Isles, Lowland or Highland, Celtic in the main, or English in the main, I conceive the various beings, fairies, brownies, *Iruntarinia*, *Djinns*, or what you will, *to be purely mythical*. I am incapable of believing that they are actual entities, who carry off men and women; steal and hide objects (especially as the *Iruntarinia* do); love or hate, persecute or kiss human beings; practise music, vocal and instrumental; and in short 'play the pliskies' with which they are universally credited by the identical workings of the human fancy. They tend to shade away, on one side, into the denizens of the House of Hades—phantasms of the dead. The belief in such phantasms may be partially based on experience, whether hallucinatory or otherwise and inexplicably produced.<sup>591</sup>

As far as psychical research studies report of these phantasms it approaches the realm of 'the Fairy Queen Proserpine'. As far as such research examines the historical or contemporary stories of the *Poltergeist*, it touches on fairies: because the Irish, for example, attribute to the agency

of fairies the modern *Poltergeist* phenomena, whether these, in each case, be fraudulent or, up to now, be unexplained.

There are not more than two or three alleged visions of the traditional fairies in the annals of psychical research; and I have met with but few sane and educated persons who profess to have seen phantoms at all resembling the traditional fairy; while phantasms supposed to be of the dead, the dying, and the absent are frequently reported. On the whole, psychical research has very little concern with the fairy-belief in its typical forms, and if the researcher did find modern cases of fairy visions alleged by sane and educated percipients, he would be apt to explain them by suggestion acting on the subconscious self.<sup>592</sup>

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Concerning phantasms of the dead into which, as above pointed out, the fairy-folk tend to shade away, Mr. Lang has elsewhere said:—‘On the whole, if the evidence is worth anything, there are real objective ghosts, and there are also telepathic hallucinations: so that the scientific attitude is to believe in both, if in either.’<sup>593</sup> And he shows that while anthropologists have explained all animistic beliefs as the results of primitive men’s philosophizing ‘on life, death, sleep, dreams, trances, shadows, the phenomena of epilepsy, and the illusions of starvation’, ‘normal phenomena, psychological and psychical, might suggest most of the animistic beliefs.’<sup>593</sup> In *The Making of Religion*, Mr. Lang has expanded this anthropological argument so as to make it even more fully embrace psychical research.

If we apply the brilliant results of Mr. Lang’s investigations to our own, it is apparent that the background of the Fairy-Faith, like that of all religions, is animistic, as we have argued in chapter iii; that it must have grown up in ancient times into its traditional form out of a pre-Celtic followed by a pre-Christian Celtic religion; these latter due, in turn, to actual psychical experiences, such as hallucinations, visions of different sorts, clairvoyance, ‘mediumship’, and magical knowledge on the part of Druid priests and, probably, to some extent, on the part of the common

people as well; and, finally, that the living Fairy-Faith depends not so much upon ancient traditions, oral and recorded, as upon recent and contemporary psychical experiences, vouched for by many ‘seers’ and other percipients among our witnesses, and now placed on record by us in chapter ii and elsewhere throughout this study.

## **The Present Position of Psychical Research**

Sir William Crookes, the well-known English authority in physical science, was almost the first scientist to become seriously interested in psychics, and in Part III of *Notes of an Enquiry into the Phenomena called Spiritual, during the Years 1870–1873* (London), boldly affirms:—‘It will be seen that the facts are of the most astounding character, and seem utterly irreconcilable with all known theories of modern science. Having satisfied myself of their *truth*, it would be moral cowardice to withhold my testimony because my previous publications were ridiculed by critics and others.’ And this conclusion reached forty years ago has not been reversed, but has been confirmed by one after another of learned scientists on both sides of the Atlantic.

In 1908, Sir Oliver Lodge, Principal of the University of Birmingham, and at present one of the best known of scientists concerned with the study of spiritual phenomena, stated his position thus:—‘On the whole, I am of those who, though they would like to see further and still stronger and more continued proofs, are of opinion that a good case has been made out, and that as the best working hypothesis at the present time it is legitimate to grant that lucid moments of intercourse with deceased persons may in the best cases supervene.... The boundary between the two states—the known and the unknown—is still substantial, but it is wearing thin in places; and like excavators engaged in boring a tunnel from opposite ends, amid the roar of water and other noises, we are beginning to hear now and again the strokes of the pickaxes of our comrades on the other side.’<sup>594</sup> In 1909, Sir Oliver Lodge published *The Survival of Man*, in which, after a careful



exposition, covering over three hundred pages, of the definite results of much scientific experimentation by the best scientists of Europe and America, in such psychical phenomena as Telepathy or Thought Transference, Telepathy and Clairvoyance, Automatism and Lucidity, the following tentative conclusion is reached:—‘The first thing we learn, perhaps the only thing we clearly learn in the first instance, is *continuity*. There is no such sudden break in the conditions of existence as may have been anticipated; and no break at all in the continuous and conscious identity of genuine character and personality.’<sup>594</sup> And his personal conviction is that ‘Intelligent co-operation between other than embodied human minds than our own... has become possible’.<sup>595</sup>

William James, who was one of the chief psychical researchers in the United States, published his conclusions in October 1909; and of psychical phenomena he wrote:—‘As to there being such real natural types of phenomena ignored by orthodox science, I am not baffled at all, for I am fully convinced of it.’ Of ‘mediumship’, he postulated the very interesting theory of a universally diffused ‘soul-stuff’, which elsewhere (p. 254) we have referred to as the scientific equivalent to the Polynesian *Mana*: ‘My own dramatic sense tends instinctively to picture the situation as an interaction between slumbering faculties in the automatist’s mind and a cosmic environment of *other consciousness* of some sort which is able to work upon them. If there were in the universe a lot of diffuse soul-stuff, unable of itself to get into consistent personal form, or to take permanent possession of an organism, yet always craving to do so, it might get its head into the air, parasitically, so to speak, by profiting by weak spots in the armour of human minds, and slipping in and stirring up there the sleeping tendencies to personate.’ Expanding this theory into a ‘pan-psychic’ view of the universe and assuming a ‘mother-sea’ of consciousness, a bank upon which we all draw, James asked these questions about it, which educated Celtic seers ask themselves about the *Sidhe* or Fairy-World and its also collective consciousness or life: ‘What is its own structure? What is its inner topography?... What are the conditions of individuation or insulation in this mother-sea? To what tracts, to what active systems functioning

separately in it, do personalities correspond? Are individual “spirits” constituted there? How numerous, and of how many hierarchic orders may these then be? How permanent? How transient? And how confluent with one another may they become?’<sup>596</sup> We should ask the reader to compare this scientific attitude with the almost identical attitude taken up with respect to the *Sidhe* Races and the constitution of their world and life by the Irish mystic and seer (pp. 60 ff.).

M. Camille Flammarion, the well-known French astronomer, is another of the pioneer psychical researchers; and in his psychic studies, entitled, as translated in an English edition, *The Unknown*, recently announced these definite conclusions:—‘(1) *The soul exists as a real entity independent of the body.* (2) *It is endowed with faculties still unknown to science.* (3) *It is able to act at a distance, without the intervention of the senses.*’ And in his *Mysterious Psychic Forces* (Boston, 1907, pp. 452–3), he says:—‘The conclusions of the present work concord with those of the former (*The Unknown*). . . . I may sum up the whole matter with the single statement that there exists in nature, in myriad activity, a *psychic element* the essential nature of which is still hidden from us.’

## **The Final Testing of the X-quantity**

This chapter can now be brought to its logical conclusion by directly applying the results so far attained to our still vigorous x-quantity or residuum gathered out of the Fairy-Faith. We have, although hurriedly, blazed a rough pathway through the necessary parts of the jungle of scientific theories, and have arrived at a very considerable clearing made by the pioneers, the psychical researchers. We seem, in fact, to have arrived at a point in our long investigations where we can postulate scientifically, on the showing of the data of psychical research, the existence of such invisible intelligences as gods, genii, daemons, all kinds of true fairies, and disembodied men. It is not necessary to produce here, in addition to what already has been set forth, the very voluminous detailed evidence of psychical research as to the existence of such intelligences. The general statement may be made that there are hundreds of carefully proven cases of phenomena or apparitions precisely like many of those which the Celtic peoples attribute to fairies.<sup>597</sup>

Various explanations or theories are offered by our men of science as to what these invisible intelligences are, for none of our scientists would say that the dead alone are responsible, even in a majority of cases, for the observed phenomena and apparitions, but rather such beings as we call daemons, fairies, and elementals. M. Camille Flammarion says:—‘The greater part of the phenomena observed—noises, movement of tables, confusions, disturbances, raps, replies to questions asked—are really childish, puerile, vulgar, often ridiculous, and rather resemble the pranks of mischievous boys than serious bona-fide actions. It is impossible not to notice this. Why should the souls of the dead amuse themselves in this way? The supposition seems almost absurd.’<sup>598</sup> There could be no better description of the pranks which house-haunting fairies like brownies and Robin Goodfellows and elementals enjoy than this; and to suppose that the dead perform such mischievous and playful acts is, in truth, absurd. M. Flammarion also says:—‘Two inescapable hypotheses present themselves.

Either it is we who produce these phenomena' (and this is not reasonable) 'or it is spirits. But mark this well: these spirits are not necessarily the souls of the dead; for other kinds of spiritual beings may exist, and space may be full of them without our ever knowing anything about it, except under unusual circumstances. *Do we not find in the different ancient literatures, demons, angels, gnomes, goblins, sprites, spectres, elementals, &c.? Perhaps these legends are not without some foundation in fact.*'<sup>598</sup>

On 'the phenomena of percussive and allied sound'—such as fairies and the dead are said to produce—Sir William Crookes made this report:—'The intelligence governing the phenomena is sometimes manifestly below that of the medium. It is frequently in direct opposition to the wishes of the medium.... The intelligence is sometimes of such a character as to lead to the belief that it does not emanate from any person present.'<sup>599</sup> In the case of the 'medium' Mr. Home, Sir William Crookes used mechanical tests and proved to his own satisfaction that physical objects moved without Mr. Home or any other person being in contact with them,<sup>600</sup> in the way that fairies are believed to move objects. These phenomena parallel remarkable ancient and modern examples of the same nature: e.g. in the affair at Cideville, France, brought before a magistrate, there is sworn evidence by reputable witnesses that pillows and coverlets floated away from a bed in which two children were asleep, and that furniture in the house moved without contact.<sup>601</sup> Mrs. Margaret Quinn, originally of Mullingar, but now of Howth, gave this remarkable testimony:—'When I was a little girl, I lived with my mother in West Meath, near Mullingar. A *fort* was at the back of our house, and mother used to hear music playing round our house all night, and she has seen *them* (the *good people*). It often happened there at home that we would have clothes out on the line and they would float off like a balloon at a time when there would not be a bit of wind and in daylight. My mother would come out and say, "God bless *them* (the *good people*). *They* will bring them back." And then the clothes would slowly come floating back to the line.' And in our chapter ii there is other testimony concerning objects moved without contact with human beings, either through the agency of fairies or of the dead. After due investigation

of such and various other phenomena, Sir William Crookes, among other theories to explain them, gives this theory:—‘*The actions of a separate order of beings, living on this earth, but invisible and immaterial to us. Able, however, occasionally to manifest their presence. Known in almost all countries and ages as demons (not necessarily bad), gnomes, fairies, kobolds, elves, goblins, Puck, &c.*’<sup>602</sup> Here we seem to have what ought to be, by this stage of our study, proof of the Psychological Theory of the nature and origin of the Fairy-Faith.

Let us now draw a few of the direct parallels thus suggested. Consider first how a fairy is said to appear, how it is described, and how it vanishes, and then compare the facts stated in the following case of a phantom reported by Sir William Crookes<sup>603</sup>:—‘In the dusk of the evening’ (just the time when fairies are most easily seen) ‘during a *séance* with Mr. Home at my house, the curtains of a window about eight feet from Mr. Home were seen to move. A dark, shadowy, semi-transparent form, like that of a man, was then seen by all present standing near the window, waving the curtain with his hand. As we looked, the form faded away and the curtain ceased to move.’ The following—Mr. Home as in the former case being the ‘medium’—is a still more striking instance:—‘A phantom form came from a corner of the room, took an accordion in its hand, and then glided about the room playing the instrument. The form was visible to all present for many minutes, Mr. Home also being seen at the same time. On its coming rather close to a lady who was sitting apart from the rest of the company, she gave a slight cry, upon which it vanished.’ Compare the following types of observed phenomena by the same authority with what our Welsh witness from the Pentre Evan country said about death-candles (p. 155):—‘I have seen a luminous cloud floating upwards to a picture.’ Or, ‘I have more than once had a solid self-luminous body placed in my hand by a hand which did not belong to any person in the room. In the light I have seen a luminous cloud hover over a heliotrope on a side-table, break a sprig off, and carry the sprig to a lady; and on some occasions I have seen a similar luminous cloud visibly condense to the form of a hand and carry small objects about.’ Similar lights, parallel to the death lights or death tokens observed by Celtic

percipients in Wales and in Brittany, and to what in Ireland are called the 'lights' of the 'good people' or 'gentry'—all of which phenomena are traceable to no material causes as yet discovered—are reported by Iamblichus and others of his school.<sup>604</sup> And such lights are among phenomena best attested by modern psychical researchers. Supernormally produced music, said to have been produced by daemons, which is parallel to that called by several of our own percipients 'fairy' music, was also known to the Neo-Platonists;<sup>604</sup> and in the scientific investigations to which Mr. Home was subjected, musical sounds were heard which could not be attributed to any known agency. In haunted houses, as psychical research discovers, the rustling of dresses, movements of objects, and sounds, often occur spontaneously without and with the occurrence of apparitions;<sup>604</sup> and these phenomena are parallel to certain ones which we have had cited by Celtic percipients as due to fairies. Mr. Lang, too, has set forth clearly the probability of real 'haunts' or spirits possessing particular places—just as fairies are said to possess particular localities or buildings in Celtic lands.

*The Report on the Census of Hallucination* by Professor Sidgwick's Committee has furnished data sufficiently good to convince many scientists that phantoms (comparable in a way with Irish banshees and the Breton *Ankou*) do appear to the living directly before a death as though announcing it.<sup>605</sup> According to other equally reliable data, sometimes a phantasmal voice—like certain 'fairy' voices—has given news of a death.<sup>606</sup> Myers and others have studied and recorded many cases of the dead appearing, as the Celtic dead appear when they have been *taken* to Fairyland.<sup>606</sup>

In *Phantasms of the Living*, by Gurney, Myers, and Podmore, the explanation of apparitions which are coincident with a death as being generated by a telepathic influence exerted upon the percipient by the dying friend, suggests the most rational interpretation of certain parallel kinds of apparitions, of the dead or of fairies, who, as in these last examples, appear dressed in garments. It is that all such apparitional appearances, coincident with a death or not, are equally due to a telepathic force exerted by an agency independent of the percipient. This outside force acts as a stimulus upon the nervous apparatus of the person to whom it is thus transmitted,

and causes him to project out of some part of his own consciousness (which part may have passed over into the subconsciousness) a visualized image already impressed there. The image has natural affinity or correspondence with the outside stimulus which arouses it.

Such an hypothesis curiously agrees in part with the one put forth by our seer-witness, the Irish mystic (p. 60 ff.). He would probably agree as to the visualization process in most types of ordinary apparitions. In addition, he holds that Nature herself has a memory: there is some indefinable psychic element in the earth's atmosphere upon which all human and physical actions or phenomena are photographed or impressed. These records in Nature's mind correspond to mental impressions in us. Under certain inexplicable conditions, normal persons who are not seers may observe Nature's mental records like pictures cast upon a screen—often like moving pictures. Seers can always see them if they wish; and uncritical seers frequently mistake these phantom records or pictures existing on the psychical envelope of the planet for actual events now occurring, and for actual beings—fairies of various kinds and the dead. A recent book entitled *An Adventure*, by Elizabeth Morison and Frances Lamont (pseudonyms), adequately illustrates what we mean by such phantom pictures. During the year 1901 these two cultured ladies saw at *le petit Trianon* of Marie Antoinette records in the mind of Nature of past historical events dating from about 1789. Of this there seems not to be the slightest doubt. The fairy boat-race on Lough Gur, as described by Count John de Salis (p. 80), and the procession seen on Tara Hill of fairies 'like soldiers of ancient Ireland in review' (p. 33), probably illustrate the same kind of phenomena (cf. pp. 55–7, 68, 74, 123, 126, &c.).

But in visions by natural seers, following again the theory of our Irish seer-witness, there is present not only an outside force (as seems to be the case when ordinary apparitions are seen) but also a veridical being with a form and life of its own in a world of its own. Such a real entity is as distinct from a picture in the memory of Nature as a living person is distinct from the mental picture which his friend holds and projects as a visualized image when responding to a telepathic stimulus sent by him. The natural

seer, not being obliged to see with his normal sense of vision, need not use the normal method (namely, visualization) of responding to the outside telepathic stimulus, and so does not see the ordinary apparitional ghost or fairy. He exercises 'second-sight' or ecstatic vision, and while so doing is in the same plane of consciousness and under the same conditions of perception as the intelligence which projects upon him the stimulus inducing automatically such 'second-sight' or ecstatic vision. Therefore, if the intelligence has a form and nature of its own, the seer and not the non-seer will perceive them in their own world while his consciousness is temporarily functioning there and out of the normal plane of mental action. In other words, in the normal plane the non-seer reacts normally upon the same stimulus upon which the seer reacts abnormally. The former percipient sees a non-real apparition, a visualized image out of his own experience; the latter claims to see a real being. The real being exists normally under conditions which are abnormal to the non-seer, but which to the seer become normal. The visualization of the non-seer is a makeshift, a psycho-physical reaction to a purely psychical stimulus.

It is mathematically possible to conceive fourth-dimensional beings, and if they exist it would be impossible in a third-dimensional plane to see them as they really are. Hence the ordinary apparition is non-real as a form, whereas the beings, which wholly sane and reliable seers claim to see when exercising seership of the highest kind, may be as real to themselves and to the seers as human beings are to us here in this third-dimensional world when we exercise normal vision.

Concerning actual demon-possession, which among spiritualists and psychical researchers would be called spirit phenomena through 'mediums', and which, as we have elsewhere pointed out (pp. 249 ff.), offers the most rational explanation for the changeling belief and related Celtic beliefs about fairies, Dr. J. L. Nevius, in his *Demon Possession*, offers very important scientific data relating to China. Dr. F. F. Ellinwood, who like that authority studied strange psychical phenomena in the interior districts of the Shantung Province (China) for many years, says in an introductory note to that work:—'Antecedently to any knowledge of the New Testament' (so



full of cases of demon-possession) ‘the people of North China believed fully in the possession of the minds and bodies of men by evil spirits.... It has always been understood that the personality of the evil spirit usurped, or for the time being supplanted, that of the unwilling victim, and acted through his organs and faculties. Physical suffering and sometimes violent paroxysms attended the presence and active influence of the spirit.’ In the face of so many cases of such phenomena observed in China by the same authorities, Dr. Ellinwood adds, as Dr. Nevius’s conclusion, that ‘no theory has been advanced which so well accords with the facts as the simple and unquestioning conclusion so universally held by the Christians of Shantung, viz. that evil spirits do in many instances possess or control the mind and will of human beings’. Hypnotism shows how one strong and magnetic human will can control the mind and will of its subject; the scientific results attained by the Society for Psychical Research in its study of spiritualism show a disembodied will or intelligence controlling and using the body of a living human being; and Dr. Nevius writes:—‘Now may not demon-possession be only a different, a more advanced form of hypnotism?’ Criminal records of Europe and America show many examples of condemned criminals who confessed in all sincerity that some invisible or outside influence led them against their better judgement to commit crime; and very often in such examples the past lives of the condemned are so good as to set up a strong probability in favour of their belief in possession. And altogether in accord with the evidence of modern mediumship, as well as that of mediumship among the ancients, Dr. Nevius says of Chinese demon-possession:—‘When normal consciousness is restored after one of these attacks, the subject is entirely ignorant of everything which has passed during that state. The most striking characteristic of those cases is that the subject evidences another personality, and the normal personality for the time being is partially or wholly dormant. The new personality presents traits of character utterly different from those which really belong to the subject in his normal state, and this change of character is, with rare exceptions, in the direction of moral obliquity and impurity. Many persons while “demon-possessed” give evidence of knowledge which cannot be

accounted for in ordinary ways.... They sometimes converse in foreign languages of which in their normal states they are entirely ignorant. There are often heard, in connexion with “demon possessions”, rappings and noises in places where no physical cause for them can be found; and tables, chairs, crockery, and the like are moved about without, so far as can be discerned, any application of physical force, exactly as we are told is the case among spiritualists.’<sup>607</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Our investigations (and far more exhaustive ones than ours touching similar psychical phenomena) show, when applied to the residuum or x-quantity, these chief results: (1) The Materialistic and the Delusion and Imposture Theories can be dismissed as not affecting it. (2) Authorities do not agree in their opinions as to the pathological and psychological processes with which we are directly concerned; they are quite uncertain how to explain the human brain in all its more subtle functions, or the sympathetic nervous system and nervous states generally, in relation especially to human consciousness under various abnormal but not diseased conditions of the organism; and they do not propose any conclusions as final, but only as very weakly tentative, though some of these are in favour of a psycho-physical view of man in which there is a close approach to the present more advanced position of psychical research. (3) Psychical research has furnished proof sufficient to convince such first-class scientists as Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, William James, M. Camille Flammarion, and others, that states of consciousness exist in nature outside of, though probably connected with, the consciousness of incarnate human beings, and that these intelligences can produce effects on matter and on the psychical constitution of man; and some of these scientists consider certain of such intelligences to be discarnate men and women. (4) Scientific proof has been adduced that there are genuine hallucinations—like those relating to fairies—of human-like forms, seen by single percipients, or collectively;

and such collective hallucinations are incapable of being explained away, which is equally true of apparitions seen by a single percipient to move physical objects. (5) Many of the foremost psychical researchers, including those named above, accept 'mediumship' or spirit-possession as the best working hypothesis to explain automatism. (6) In the accepted theory of telepathy we have support for assuming that, like hypnosis, it is a psychical process, and can be carried on either by two embodied spirits or human beings, or by a disembodied spirit and one still incarnate. Myers's theories, including that of the Subliminal Self, embody all the preceding ones and agree in details with them. (7) The results taken together harmonize with those attained in our study of psychical phenomena attributed by the Celtic peoples to fairies; and, if they be accepted, older psychological and pathological theories must be thoroughly revised in many cases, or else cast aside as worthless. Finally, since we have demonstrated that the background of the Fairy-Faith, and hence the residuum or x-quantity of it, is like the background of all religious and mystical beliefs, being animistic, and like them has grown up in ancient times out of definite psychical phenomena identical in character with those now studied by science, and is kept alive by an unbroken succession of 'seers' and percipients, we have a clear right to set up under scientific authority these tentative conclusions: (1) Fairyland exists as a supernormal state of consciousness into which men and women may enter temporarily in dreams, trances, or in various ecstatic conditions; or for an indefinite period at death. (2) Fairies exist, because in all essentials they appear to be the same as the intelligent forces now recognized by psychical researchers, be they thus collective units of consciousness like what William James has called 'soul-stuff', or more individual units, like veridical apparitions. (3) Our examination of living children said to have been changed by fairies shows (see pp. 250–1) (*a*) that many changelings are so called merely because of some bodily deformity or because of some abnormal mental or pathological characteristics capable of an ordinary rational explanation, (*b*) but that other changelings who exhibit a change of personality, such as is recognized by psychologists, are in many cases best

explained on the Demon-Possession Theory, which is a well-established scientific hypothesis.

Therefore, since the residuum or x-quantity of the Fairy-Faith, the folk-religion of the Celtic peoples, cannot be explained away by any known scientific laws, it must for the present stand, and the Psychological Theory of the Nature and Origin of the Belief in Fairies in Celtic Countries is to be considered as hypothetically established in the eyes of Science. Hence we must cease to look upon the term *fairy* as being always a synonym for something fanciful, non-real, absurd. We must also cease to think of the Fairy-Faith as being no more than a fabric of groundless beliefs. In short, the ordinary non-Celtic mind must readjust itself to a new set of phenomena which through ignorance on its part it has been content to disregard, and to treat with ridicule and contempt as so much outworn 'superstition'.

# **Chapter XII**

## **The Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth and Otherworld Scientifically Examined**

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‘If all things which partook of life were to die, and after they were dead remained in the form of death, and did not come to life again, all would at last die, and nothing would be alive—what other result could there be?’—Socrates, as reported by Plato.

‘The soul, if immortal, existed before our birth. What is incorruptible must be ungenerable.’—Hume.

‘If there be no reasons to suppose that we have existed before that period at which our existence apparently commences, then there are no grounds for supposing that we shall continue to exist after our existence has apparently ceased.’—Shelley.

The extension of the terms Fairy and Fairyland—The real man as an invisible force acting through a body-conductor—A psychical organ essential for memory—Pre-existence a scientific necessity—The vitalistic view of evolution—Old theory of heredity disproved—Embryology supports re-birth doctrine—Psycho-physical evolution—Memory of previous existences in subconsciousness—Examples—Dream psychology furnishes clearest illustrations—No post-existence without pre-existence—Resurrection as re-birth—The Circle of Life—The mystical corollary—Conclusion: the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth and Otherworld is essentially scientific.

In the esoteric Fairy-Faith, the terms Fairy and Fairyland attain their

broadest meaning. To the Celtic mystic, the universe is divisible into two interpenetrating parts or aspects: the visible in which we are now, and the invisible which is Fairyland or the Otherworld; and a fairy is an intelligent being, either embodied as a member of the human race or else resident in the Otherworld. The latter class includes many distinct hierarchies and lower orders. Some, like the highest of the Tuatha De Danann, who are the same in character as the gods of the Greeks and Hindoos, are superhuman; others are the souls of the dead; while many are subhuman and have never been embodied in gross physical bodies. These last include daemons (incorrectly regarded by Christian and other theologies as being in all cases evil, and called demons); and other like spirits, such as those which Dr. Tylor, in *Primitive Culture*, has designated nature spirits (leprechauns, pixies, knockers, *corrigans*, *lutins*, *little folk*, elves generally, and their counterparts in all non-Celtic Fairy-Faiths), which are the elementals of mediaeval mystics.

In the preceding chapter chiefly the lower species of fairies were under consideration, but now the higher orders (including human souls embodied and disembodied), in their relation toward one another, are to be considered independently. It becomes necessary, then, to present here a view of life and death not yet scientifically orthodox.

The Celt in all ages of his long history, like the ancient Greek thinkers with whom his ancestors were contemporary, has always been inclined, unlike modern scientists, to seek an explanation for the phenomena of evolutionary life by postulating a noumenal world of causes as the background of the phenomenal world of effects. To-day, the rapid march of scientific pioneers, chiefly those in psychical research, is bringing our own cold and exact science very close to that indefinable boundary which separates the two worlds; and for that reason alone a presentation of the Celtic theory of the causes operating to produce death and birth will be, at least by way of suggestion, of some value.

Facts of common everyday knowledge are apt to lose their significance through too great familiarity. A fact of this character is that when each child is born it must awaken into life. Often it is not known whether the newly-

born babe is dead or alive until it stretches forth its arms and breathes or cries. And this phenomenon of our first awakening and entry upon the visible plane of life and conscious action seems to corroborate what the early Celt who thoughtfully observed it held to be true, and what the Celt of to-day holds to be true: that the material substance composing the body of man is merely a means of expression for life, a conductor for an unknown force which exhibits volition and individual consciousness; just as material substance in a condition called inanimate is a conductor for another unknown force called electricity, which does not exhibit any volition or consciousness. Destroy the human body, and there is no manifestation of its life force; destroy a wire, and there is no manifestation of electric light: the human body seems to be merely incidental in the history of the individual consciousness, as a wire is incidental to electric light.

But is this consciousness of man which we call life simply a phenomenon of matter non-existent without a physical means of expression, or does it—like electricity after the wire is destroyed—continue to exist in an unmanifested state when the human body is cold and motionless in death? And in the case of a child born dead has this consciousness found some organic imperfection in the newly-constructed infant body which made its manifestation impossible? A few thoughts to aid in answering these questions will probably suggest themselves if we briefly consider the great difference between a human body in life and a human body in death. In life, there is the highly organized, delicately adjusted, perfectly balanced human body responding to the will of an invisible power; and it is admitted by all schools of philosophers, moralists, and scientists that this invisible power—whatever it may be—is the real man.

This invisible power, beginning its manifestation through a microscopic bit of germ-plasm, gradually builds for itself a more and more complex physical habitation, until, after the short space of nine months, it claims membership among the ranks of men. During the many years of its sojourn on our planet, it renews its habitation many times. Every atom it began with in childhood is discarded and replaced by a new one long before the age of manhood is reached, and yet upon reaching manhood the invisible power

remembers what it did in a child's frame. This indicates that memory or consciousness as a psychical process does not depend essentially upon a material brain nor upon a certain grouping of ever-changing brain-substance; for if it did, apparently it would slowly and imperceptibly undergo change as completely as the whole physical body and brain. This physiological process furnishes sufficient data to allow us to postulate that there is a psychical organ of memory behind the physical sense-consciousness, and that such an organ in itself is, at least during a human-life period, unchanging in its composition. Without such an organ, the process of memory when more fully analysed (in a way we cannot here attempt) is inexplicable.<sup>608</sup>

The simplest hypothesis is to conceive that organ as the one connected with the subconsciousness or super-sense-consciousness, by means of which the invisible power or rememberer is able to remember and to impress its memory upon the temporary and continually unstable physical brain. In the process of memory there must be first of all a thing to be remembered; second, a record of that thing to be remembered; and third, something to remember that thing. The thing remembered is the result of a conscious experience, the record of it the result of its impress at the time it was experienced, but the rememberer is neither.

That invisible power, which we have called the real man, animates the body, it places food in it as fuel to produce animal heat, animal vitality and force, and tries to keep it in good working order as long as possible. If the body is imperfect at birth or becomes so later, that invisible power is forced to act through it imperfectly; if the brain is diseased, there is insanity, if undeveloped, idiocy; and when the body ceases to respond either perfectly or imperfectly, the invisible power must surrender it entirely, and there is what we call death.

Now what is this invisible power or force which has entirely vanished, leaving the physical body and brain cold and motionless? Let us see if there is an answer. Chemical analysis proves that the visible parts of the body of man are merely transformed gases; but in a complete analysis of a living body such as man's there are certain elements to be considered which are



always invisible.<sup>609</sup> Thus at death there is instantly a cessation of all bodily consciousness—of all willing, thinking, movement. The power which has made the body conscious, and which cannot be compared to any known form of matter, is entirely gone. But there is left in the body a moment after its departure everything which we know to be material—the animal heat, the animal magnetism, the animal vitality. When these are gone, the body is cold and stiff, and in no essential way unlike any other mass of inert matter. If heat be applied to the body, or magnetism, or vital forces, there is nothing in it to retain them any more than there would be in a stone. The real man is gone. Then the body begins to disintegrate. The law of the conservation of energy and the indestructibility of matter makes it certain that in the process of death nothing has been lost, certainly nothing material. The animal heat has gone off somewhere in the atmosphere or in some other matter; the animal magnetism and vitality are momentarily lost sight of, but soon they will be attached to other organic beings such as plants or animals to begin a new cycle of embodiment. The physical constituents of the body will go to their appropriate places, into the air as gases, into the water as fluids, into the earth as salts and minerals, and in a short time may form the parts of a flower, or fruit, or animal. But where or what is the willing, the thinking, the remembering, the directing force which once controlled all these and held them together in unity? Ultra-violet rays are invisible, but they show their existence through their chemical action; similarly a soul or Ego may exist invisibly and show its existence through the vital and physical unity manifested by a living human being. As we have already seen in the preceding chapter, there are a number of the first men of science who feel that when all the data of the latest scientific discoveries in the realm of psychology and of psychical research are impartially examined there is no escape from some such hypothesis as the ancient hypothesis of a soul.

If we accept the soul hypothesis, as it seems we must, and regard a soul as an indestructible unit of invisible power possessing consciousness and volition, and normally able to exist independently of a human body, then it becomes a logical and a scientific necessity to postulate its pre-existence, because as such a unit it is indestructible, in accordance with the law of the

conservation of energy and indestructibility of matter. We speak here not of the ordinary soul or human personal consciousness, but of that Ego which Celtic mystics conceive as the permanent principle (though probably itself relative to some still higher power) behind the personality—which, in turn, they believe is a temporary combination wholly dependent upon the Ego. Accordingly, it is scientifically possible for such a soul as a homogeneous unit of force or conscious energy to pass from one mass of matter or physical body to another without disintegration, diminution, or loss of its own identity. It is scientifically certain, also, from experiments performed to test the power of resistance to decomposition exhibited by the force which we call life in an organic body, that such a force is capable of outwearing many physical embodiments.<sup>610</sup> Recent demonstrations tend to show that the heredity hypothesis cannot be held to account fully for such widely varied character or soul individuality as may be exhibited by members of one family. We must therefore account for mental, moral, and certainly psychical inequalities among our race by some other hypothesis; and no hypothesis is more scientific, more in line with known physiological and psychical processes, or more in accord with the law of evolution, than that of re-birth.

The theory of the mechanical transmission of acquired characteristics in a purely physical manner through the germ-plasm is no longer tenable when all the data of physiology and psychology are admitted. A vitalistic view of evolution is rapidly developing in the scientific world, and the weight of evidence is decidedly in favour of regarding all evolutionary processes, reaching from the lowest to the highest organisms, as illustrating a gradual unfolding in the sensuous world of a pre-existing psychical power through an ever-increasing complexity of specialized structures, this complexity being brought about by natural selection. Such a view is also strongly supported if not confirmed by the general scientific belief that spontaneous generation of life is and always has been impossible on our planet or on any planet: there must have been life before its physical manifestation or its physical evolution began.

We may regard this psychical power as like a vast reservoir of consciousness ever trying to force itself through matter, the walls of the reservoir. Through the microscopic body of an amoeba there has percolated a very minute drop from the reservoir. As evolution advances, the walls of the reservoir become more and more porous, and little by little the drop increases to a tiny rivulet. Through the higher animals, the tiny rivulet flows as a brook. Through man as he is, the brook flows as a deep and broad river. Throughout the completely evolved man of the far distant future, the deep and broad river will have overflowed all its banks, it will have inundated and completely overwhelmed the animal-human nature of the individual through whom it flows, as the whole volume of the vast reservoir pours itself out. The ordinary consciousness of man will then have been transmuted into the subconsciousness, of which it had always been a pale reflection. In other words, if the theory of the mechanical transmission of acquired characteristics has failed, as seems to be the case, then we must assume that there is, as the bearer of all gains made from generation to generation, some sort of psychical or vitalistic principle. This, making use of the germ-plasm merely as a physical basis for its manifestation, begins to build up a body suited to its further evolutionary needs.

The brilliant discoveries of Dr. Jacques Loeb and of M. Yves Delage have demolished absolutely the old idea that each organ and each tissue contained in embryo in the normal egg-germ must develop in a particular and co-ordinate way into a normal organism and after the parental type: it is possible to make a head grow where there ought to be feet; and at Zürich, Standfuss, solely through changing the temperature of his laboratory, was able to obtain from the same species of butterfly forms which were tropical and forms which were arctic.<sup>611</sup> All this helps to establish the hypothesis, which amounts to certainty, that the conformation of a physical body, or even the kind of species to be born, is directly determined by physical environment and not by heredity, and that the chief factor to consider in organisms is the life animating the body. Physical environment affects only the physical organism; it does not affect the invisible and unknown life-principle resident within the physical organism.

The process of fertilization is a physical process. As such it is simply initiatory to embryonic evolution which also is physical. Once the proper physical conditions are set up by the parents, life pursues its marvellous progress in the womb of the human mother, from the amoeba-like initial embryo to man. That is to say, parents set in motion the laws governing the reproduction of physical bodies. They create such conditions as enable the invisible life-force to begin its physical manifestation.<sup>612</sup> In the two fused germs from the parents resides the physical inheritance of the offspring, to be outwardly shaped by environment; but the physical inheritance is a thing distinct from the psychical part of the living being, just as much as the dead human body is a thing apart from the life which has left it. Though the old heredity theory is overthrown by late discoveries, the question as to what life is in human bodies under all possible environmental conditions remains unsolved; and so do the questions why there should be sports in nature, which among man are called geniuses, and why every human being has a distinct and highly developed individual character, essentially unlike that of his immediate ancestors.

Embryology proves conclusively that the human embryo retraces in its growth the evolution of lower life-forms. At first consisting of two single cells fused into one, it is like the amoeba. By cell-division it grows and progresses step by step through each lower realm of being until it comes to be a water-creature with gills; and science teaches that all organic life on this planet once dwelt in the seas. It grows progressively out of the water-world stage of organic life into the world of air-breathing creatures. Nature at last achieves her highest product, and a human being is born out of the Womb of Time. The initial microscopic bit of germ-plasm is endowed with power of motion, thought, and human consciousness, with dominion over all the lower kingdoms through which by right of ancient conquests it passed in the brief period of nine months. On every side the problem of life is full of poetry and wonder; it is the greatest mystery.

Not only can we thus study the age-long evolution of the physical man, but we have recently acquired sufficient scientific data to lay foundations for a study of the evolution of the psychical man. Thus, for example,

instincts seem to be nothing more than habits which through unknown periods of time have become so ingrained in the constitution of man, and of all animals, that now they have become second nature and usually are exercised without the need of reasoning processes. The influence from innate sensuous experiences rises into consciousness as the life of every normal child and youth unfolds itself; and these experiences in their full expansion, when the age of maturity has been reached, constitute in their unity what we call character, which, in one sense, may be defined as the sum total of instincts of every kind. From such a point of view, the psychical or invisible power in man is merely a bundle of acquired habits which make use of the bodily organism in order to express themselves—in the same way, as we have pointed out, that electrical forces manifest their presence through a conductor. If these habits be good, we call their possessor a good man; if evil, we call him an evil man.

The theory of Charles Darwin suggests that all evolutionary progress is directed to the acquirement of newer and ever higher instincts. And if this process be the true one, that is to say, if all instincts, which in their finer distinctions mark off species from species in all animal kingdoms, be as Darwin thought—and as is to-day more clearly evident—the result of a long and gradual evolution through experience in a sensuous realm of existence, then it would seem to follow that there must be some kind of a monad (probably a non-sensuous one) to which such acquired instincts can attach themselves. Such a monad, too, must have been a percipient and hence a recorder of such ever-accumulating experiences throughout an inconceivably long chain of lives, and it of itself must, while so perceiving and recording, not be subject to the transitoriness of the sensuous realm wherein it gathers together these instincts, which in their unified expression form its personality or human character.

In harmony with the vitalistic view of evolution, which implies a pre-existent psychical power continually striving to express itself completely through matter, yet normally able to exist independently of a physical means of expression, we should regard such high mental processes as judgement, reasoning, analysis and synthesis, and spatial perception, along

with memory, as resultants of very great experience in a sensuous world, on which in our present psycho-physical constitution such processes appear to have direct bearing. In other words, for man to be able to exercise such high mental processes there is need to postulate incalculable ages of specialization in the nervous apparatus, and in psycho-physical adjustment, of a kind which has thus enabled the psychical power to express itself to such a supreme degree in the realm of mind and matter. The same vitalistic argument is applicable to the lower mental processes and to the instinctual powers in man, because we cannot at any time, in viewing the complete evolution of man as a twofold being composed of a physical and a psychical part, force aside Fechner's conviction that the problem is a psycho-physical one. A study of sexual instincts in children seems to confirm this.<sup>613</sup>

Such a psychical and vitalistic hypothesis is, as we have seen, strongly supported by embryology; and embryology proves conclusively the need of long ages of physical evolution for the development of each tissue and highly specialized organ in the human body. Certain French and German and other scientists of the vitalistic school have demonstrated physiologically the need of a pre-existent power as the unifying principle which attracts and compels material atoms to group themselves into the pattern of the human body<sup>614</sup>—or, as we may add, of any organic body. Psychical researchers at the outset of their science seem apparently to have demonstrated psychologically the post-existence of the personal consciousness-unity; and it is very likely when further progress has been made in psychics that there will arise a logical need to postulate, in addition to the personal consciousness-unity, a hypothetical pre-existent soul-monad as the unifying principle which attracts and compels psychical atoms of experience (if such an expression may be used) to group themselves into the personal consciousness-unity which appears to survive the death of the gross physical body—for a long or short time, as future research may show.<sup>615</sup> Such a soul-monad, to follow the view held by Celtic mystics, led by acquired instincts which were transmitted to it through the personality (held by the Celtic esoteric doctrine to be a temporary combination), apparently weaves out of matter the body-unit adapted to its further

evolution, in a way analogous to that in which a silkworm is led by acquired instincts to weave a cocoon. This body-unit is twofold: (1) the visible body derived from the visible elements of matter; and (2) the invisible or ghost-body derived from the invisible or ethereal elements of matter.

Strictly speaking, for the Celtic mystic this soul-monad is something upon which the personal consciousness depends for its psychical unity in precisely the same way as the physical body depends upon the personal consciousness for its physical unity. The Celtic mystic holds that just as the body-unity falls back again into its primal elements of matter, so the personal consciousness-unity (apparently able to survive in the ghost-body for a long period after its separation from the grosser physical envelope or human body) also in due time is discarded by the soul-monad or individuality, and then falls back into its primal psychical constituents. In other words, the Celtic Esoteric Doctrine of Re-birth correctly interpreted does not conceive personal immortality, but it conceives a greater kind of immortality—the immortality of the unknown principle which gives unity to each temporary personality it makes use of, and which we prefer to designate as the individuality, the impersonator. And this individuality is the bearer of all evolutionary gains made in each temporary personality through which it reflects itself: it is the permanent evolving principle.

Perhaps an analogy drawn from nature will make the Celtic position clearer: we may say that the personality occupies a position between the human body and the soul-monad, just as the moon occupies a position between the earth and the sun. Personal consciousness is to the human body what the moonlight is to the earth, merely a pale reflection from a third thing, the soul-monad or individuality, which is the ultimate source of both sets of unities, the material or body-unity in its twofold aspect and the psychical or personal consciousness-unity. Each personality is temporary, while the individuality, like the sun in relation to the earth and moon, is capable of at least a relative immortality: the sun's light, as science holds, existed before there was any moon to reflect it on to the earth, and may continue to exist when both the moon and earth are disintegrated. The essential nature of the sun's energy or life remains unknown to science; so

does the essential nature of the energy or life manifesting itself as the individuality. Though all such analogies are more or less weak, this one adequately fits in with the theories concerning the Celtic Esoteric Doctrine of Re-birth which the most learned of contemporary Celts, chiefly mystics, have favoured us with; and it is our rare privilege to put these theories on record for whatever they may be worth. The best hypothesis is always the one which best explains all available data, and, to our mind, when very minutely examined, in a way which (chiefly for reasons of space) cannot be attempted here, this Celtic hypothesis concerning the nature and destiny of man is the best hitherto adduced.<sup>616</sup>

Objectors to the Re-birth Doctrine as held by the Celts and other peoples anciently and now, naturally ask why, if we have lived before here on earth in physical bodies, we do not remember it. But the shallowness and unscientific nature of this question is at once apparent to psychologists who know that there exists in man a subconscious mind which in the great mass of people is almost totally dormant. ‘The subconscious self,’ wrote William James, ‘is nowadays a well-accredited psychological entity.... Apart from all religious considerations, there is actually and literally more life in our total soul than we are at any time aware of.’ And he added:—‘It thus is “scientific” to interpret all otherwise unaccountable invasive alternations of consciousness as results of the tension of subliminal memories reaching a bursting point.’<sup>617</sup> Intuition, which all men have experienced, would seem to be the result of a momentary contact by the physical brain with its psychical counterpart—the subconscious self, the individuality as distinguished from the personality.

Certain observed psychological processes in ordinary men and women, who never really know that they have a subconsciousness or Transcendental Self, prove that it exists even for them, and any part of man which exists and functions of itself can be developed so as to be consciously perceived. This is incontestable. Let us point out a few of these observed and recorded psychological processes. There may be an unsolved problem in the mind, or inability to recall a certain name or fact, and then a sudden, unexpected intuitional solving of the problem and an instantaneous recollecting of the



desired facts, at a time when the ordinary mind may be entirely absorbed in altogether foreign thoughts. Again, many persons through accident or disease have lost their memory to such an extent as to require complete re-education, and then in time, gradually or instantaneously, as the case may be, have completely recovered it.<sup>618</sup> And we noticed in our study of supernatural lapse of time (p. 469) that at the moment of accidental loss of consciousness, as in drowning for example, all forgotten details of life are instantaneously reproduced in a complete panorama. These psychological processes support what we have said above with respect to a psychical organ being behind the sense-consciousness, and seem thus to prove that the subconscious mind is the place for recording permanently all experiences.<sup>619</sup> Under hypnosis, a subject may be requested to perform a certain act, let us say 11,999 minutes after the moment of making the request. When the hypnotic condition is removed, the subject has no personal consciousness of the suggestion, but, as different experiments have proved conclusively, he invariably performs the act exactly at the expiration of the 11,999 minutes without knowing why he does so. This proves that there is a subconsciousness in man which can take full cognizance of such a suggestion, which can keep count of the passing of time and then cause the unconscious personality to act in response to its will.<sup>620</sup> Again, in extreme old age people who have come to have an imperfect memory or none at all in their normal consciousness, under abnormal conditions (which seemingly are due to a temporary influx of a latent psychical power into the physical body and brain, or else to an awakening of a dormant force within the physical body and brain themselves) often regain, for a time, complete and clear memory of their childhood. This proves that the memory is somewhere still perfect, and that it does not reside in the consciousness of the age-exhausted physical brain and memory. Albert Moll, in his treatise on hypnotism, says that events in the normal life which have dropped out of memory can be remembered in hypnosis:—‘An English officer in Africa was hypnotized by Hansen, and suddenly began to speak a strange language. This turned out to be Welsh, which he had learnt as a child, but had forgotten.’<sup>621</sup> And even memory of acts done in hypnotic

somnambulism can be awakened in the normal state.<sup>622</sup> Furthermore, through psycho-analysis, as Professor Freud has shown, forgotten dreams and dreams which were never complete in the ordinary consciousness can be recovered in their entirety out of the subconsciousness.<sup>623</sup> How many of us can recall without some mental stimulus certain acts performed ten years ago? A good deal of our present life is no longer vivid, much of it is forgotten, and in old age many of the memories of youth and of mature life will be subconscious. If this brain, whose total existence is comprised between birth and death, cannot remember in a normal way all its own experiences, how could it be expected to know anything at all of hypothetical past lives where there were various physical brains long ago disintegrated—unless the hypothetically ever-existing transcendental individuality, whose consciousness is the subconsciousness, be made by some unusual psychical stimuli to transmit its memory of the past lives to each new brain it creates? In other words, to have memory of pre-existent conditions there must be continuity of association with present conditions. If such continuity exists, it exists in the subconsciousness. And if it exists therein, then in order to recall in the present personal or ordinary consciousness, which began at birth, memory of an anterior state of consciousness, it would be necessary to hold impressed upon the present physical brain and body a clear and unremittent consciousness of the subconsciousness. In relation to our personal consciousness, apparently our greatest powers lie in the subconsciousness which is sleeping and in embryo, awaiting to be born into the consciousness of this world through the slow process of evolutionary gestation. In the case of a Buddha, who on good historical authority is said to have been able to recall all past existences from the lowest to the highest, this evolutionary process seems to have reached completion.<sup>624</sup>

Under ordinary conditions, individuals have been known to see a place which they have never seen before, or to do a thing which they have never done before in this life nor in any conscious dream-state, and yet feel that they have seen the place before and done the thing before. M. Th. Ribot, in his *Diseases of Memory* (chapter iv), has brought together many cases of

this kind. Some are undoubtedly explicable as forgotten experiences of the present life. Others, to our mind, strongly support the theory of pre-existent experiences preserved in memory in the subconsciousness.

Under chloroform, or other anaesthetics, patients often recover for the time being forgotten facts of experience, and sometimes appear to make momentary contact with their subconsciousness and to exhibit therein another personality. In certain well-defined types of double personality, which are not the kind due to demon-possession nor to spirit-possession as in 'mediumship', there are two memories, 'each complete and absolutely independent of the other.'<sup>625</sup> And in similar cases, where the subject exhibits alternately numerous personalities, we see the individuality, that is to say the subconscious man, exhibiting, as a dramatist might, various characters or personalities of probable past existences according as each is most active at the moment. Similarly, crystal-gazing sometimes seems not only to revive lost memories of this life, but also to call up subconscious memories of some unknown state of consciousness which may be from a previous life.<sup>626</sup>

M. Ribot has made it clear from his careful study of numerous cases of amnesia (loss of memory) that 'recollections return in an inverse order to that in which they disappear'. For example, a celebrated Russian astronomer lost all memory save that of his childhood, and in recovering it there appeared first the recollections of youth, then those of middle age, then the experiences of later years, and, finally, the most recent events. Many even more marked examples of the law of regression in amnesia are given by M. Ribot. We conclude from them that all strange and apparently long-forgotten facts of experience arising in consciousness out of the subconsciousness, as in the different cases which have been cited above, would necessarily be those which have been the longest lost to memory; and hence if they cannot be attached to this present life then they can only be derived from a former life, because every primary detail of memory must always originate from an experience at some past period of time. M. Ribot himself, in his conclusion to *The Diseases of Memory*, makes this significant observation with respect to the law of regression in amnesia:

—‘This law of regression provides us with an explanation for extraordinary revivification of certain recollections when the mind turns backward to conditions of existence that had apparently disappeared for ever.’

In dreams there is a great wealth of latent memory; sometimes memory of the present waking life, but often not capable, apparently, of being attached to it, nor explicable as due to the soul wandering from the body during sleep: the hypothesis of re-birth seems to be the only adequate one here. Certain dreams suggest that man possesses innate memories extending backwards to prehistoric times (cf. p. 5 above). This fits in with Professor Freud’s theory in his *Die Traumdeutung*, that ‘the dream is nothing else than the concealed fulfilment of a repressed wish.’ Some dreams are ‘in the form of frightful, cruel, horrible scenes, which seem frightful to us, but in a certain depth of the unconscious satisfy wishes which, in the “prehistoric” ages of our own mental development, were actually recognized as desires.’<sup>627</sup> This also supports our vitalistic view of the evolution of human instincts. Again, in somnambulism there is a much more exalted memory, and clear cases are on record of facts being then consciously present which cannot be accounted for save through the same hypothesis.<sup>628</sup>

If we keep in mind the psychology of the dream state, we shall probably get the clearest intellectual theory as to why, if pre-existence be true, we do not remember various previous states of existence. In our present state of consciousness we may enter a dream state, in that dream state by dreaming we enter a second dream state, and theoretically, though not by common experience, there may be no limit to superimposed dream states, each one in itself a state of consciousness distinct from the waking consciousness. Accordingly, if, as Wordsworth put it, ‘our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting’ of another state of consciousness, and death the abrupt ending of that sleep of dreams and a waking up, or if the direct opposite be true, and death is the entrance to a sleep and dream state of consciousness, it becomes very clear how difficult it would be for us here now either to recall what we may have dreamt or have actually done in another state of conscious existence corresponding to our present one. The subtle thinkers of modern India, who completely accept the doctrine of re-birth as a

universal law, have summed up this abstruse aspect of the dream psychology as follows:—‘The first or spiritual state was ecstasy; from ecstasy it (the Ego) forgot itself into deep sleep; from deep sleep it awoke out of unconsciousness, but still within itself, into the internal world of dreams; from dreaming it passed finally into the thoroughly waking state, and the outer world of sense.’<sup>629</sup> But our own psychologists are not yet far enough advanced to accept this; much more work in psychical research must first be done before it will be possible for them to announce to the West that pre-existence is a necessary condition for post-existence which they now hypothetically accept. If for the present our standpoint be that of our own psychologists, we may then think of the human consciousness as a spectrum whose central parts alone are visible to us. Beyond at either end lies an unseen and to us unknown region, awaiting its explorer from the West. ‘Each one of us is in reality an abiding psychical entity far more extensive than he knows—an individuality which can never express itself completely through any corporeal manifestation. The Self manifests through the organism; but there is always some part of the Self unmanifested; and always, as it seems, some power of organic expression in abeyance or reserve.’<sup>630</sup> William James stated the position thus:—‘The B. region’ (another name for the region of subconsciousness), ‘then, is obviously the larger part of each of us, for it is the abode of everything that is latent, and the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded and unobserved.’<sup>631</sup>

Men of science see no way of accepting the doctrine of the resurrection of the physical body as at present interpreted by Christian theology; but the late Professor Th. Henri Martin, Dean of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Rennes, has suggested in his *La Vie future* that the doctrine may be the exoteric interpretation of a long-forgotten esoteric truth; namely, that the soul may be resurrected in a new physical body, and this is scientifically possible.<sup>632</sup>

The ancient scientists called Life a Circle. In the upper half of this Circle, or here on the visible plane, we know that in the physiological history of man and of all living things there is first the embryonic or

prenatal state, then birth; and as life, like a sun, rises in its new-born power toward the zenith, there is childhood, youth, and maturity; and then, as it passes the zenith on its way to the horizon, there is decline, old age, and, finally, death; and as a scientific possibility we have in the lower half of the Circle, in Hades or the Otherworld of the Celts and of all peoples, corresponding processes between death and a hypothetical but logically necessary re-birth.<sup>633</sup>

The logical corollary to the re-birth doctrine, and an integral part of the Celtic esoteric theory of evolution, is that there have been human races like the present human race who in past aeons of time have evolved completely out of the human plane of conscious existence into the divine plane of conscious existence. Hence the gods are beings which once were men, and the actual race of men will in time become gods. Man now stands related to the divine and invisible world in precisely the same manner that the brute stands related to the human race. To the gods, man is a being in a lower kingdom of evolution. According to the complete Celtic belief, the gods can and do enter the human world for the specific purposes of teaching men how to advance most rapidly toward the higher kingdom. In other words, all the Great Teachers, e.g. Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster, and many others, in different ages and among various races, whose teachings are extant, are, according to a belief yet held by educated and mystical Celts, divine beings who in inconceivably past ages were men but who are now gods, able at will to incarnate into our world, in order to emphasize the need which exists in nature, by virtue of the working of evolutionary laws (to which they themselves are still subject), for man to look forward, and so strive to reach divinity rather than to look backward in evolution and thereby fall into mere animalism. The stating of this mystical corollary makes the exposition of the Fairy-Faith complete, at least in outline.

As shown by the Barddas MSS. in our chapter vii, the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth is the scientific extension of Darwin's law as corrected,<sup>634</sup> that alone through traversing the Circle of Life man reaches that destined perfection which natural analogies, life's processes as exhibited by living things, and evolution, suggest, and from which at present man is so far

removed. There seems to emerge this postulate: the world is the object of normal consciousness, the Ego or Soul-Monad the object of subconsciousness; and the subconsciousness cannot be realized in the world until through the normal consciousness of man the Ego is able to function completely, and so endow man with full self-consciousness in matter, which endowment seems to be the goal of all planetary evolution.

We conclude that the Otherworld of the Celts and their Doctrine of Re-birth accord thoroughly in their essentials with modern science; and, accordingly, with other essential elements in the complete Celtic Fairy-Faith which we have in the preceding chapter found to be equally scientific, establish our Psychological Theory of the Nature and Origin of that Fairy-Faith upon a logical and solid foundation; and we now submit this study to the judgement of our readers. With more complete evidence in the future, both from folk-lore and from science, there will be, we trust, a better vindication of the Theory, and perhaps finally there will come about its transformation into what it but seems to us to be now—a Fact.

Some beliefs which a century ago were regarded as absurdities are now regarded as fundamentally scientific. In the same way, what in this generation is heretical alike to the Christian theologian and to the man of science may in coming generations be accepted as orthodox.

## Footnotes:

1. Quite appropriately it means *place of cairns* or *tumuli*—those prehistoric monuments religious and funereal in their purposes. *Carnac* seems to be a Gallo-Roman form. According to Professor J. Loth, the Breton (Celtic) forms would be: old Celtic, *Carnāco-s*; old Breton (ninth-eleventh century), *Carnoc*; Middle Breton (eleventh-sixteenth century), *Carneuc*; Modern Breton, *Carneac*.
2. For we cannot offer any proof of what at first sight appears like a philological relation or identity between *Carnac* and *Karnak*.
3. Andrew Lang, Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth* (London, 1893), p. xviii; and *History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1900–07).
4. Cf. David MacRitchie's published criticisms of our Psychological Theory in *The Celtic Review* (January 1910), entitled *Druids and Mound-Dwellers*; also his first part of these criticisms, *ib.* (October 1909), entitled *A New Solution of the Fairy Problem*.
5. Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* (Edinburgh, 1900), i, p. xix.
6. The *ceilidh* of the Western Hebrides corresponds to the *veillée* of Lower Brittany (see pp. 221 ff.), and to similar story-telling festivals which formerly flourished among all the Celtic peoples. 'The *ceilidh* is a literary entertainment where stories and tales, poems, and ballads, are rehearsed and recited, and songs are sung, conundrums are put, proverbs are quoted, and many other literary matters are related and discussed.'—Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, i, p. xviii.
7. I am indebted for this information to the late Mr. Davies, the competent scholar and antiquarian of Newcastle-Emlyn, where for many years he has been vicar.
8. In the Gnosis, St. Michael symbolizes the sun, and thus very appropriately at St. Michael's Mount, Cornwall, at Mont St. Michel, Carnac, and also at Mont St. Michel on the coast of Normandy, replaced the Great God of Light and Life, held in supreme honour among the ancient Celts.
9. In this connexion we may think of the North and South Magnetic Poles of the earth as centres of definite yet invisible forces which can be detected, and to some extent measured scientifically.
10. Anglo-Irish for *rath*, a circular earthen fort.
11. Throughout Ireland there are many ancient, often prehistoric, earthworks or tumuli, which are popularly called *forts*, *raths*, or *dúns*, and in folk-belief these are considered fairy hills or the abodes of various orders of fairies. In this belief we see at work a definite anthropomorphism which attributes dwellings here on earth to an invisible spirit-race, as though this race were actually the spirits of the ancient Irish who built the *forts*. As we proceed, we shall see how important and varied a part these earthworks play in the Irish Fairy-Faith (cf. chapter viii, on Archaeology).



12. An Irish mystic, and seer of great power, with whom I have often discussed the Fairy-Faith in its details, regards 'fairy paths' or 'fairy passes' as actual magnetic arteries, so to speak, through which circulates the earth's magnetism.
13. 'Irish scholars differ as to the signification of *Meadha*. Some say that it is the genitive case of *Meadh*, the name of some ancient chieftain who was buried in the hill. *Knock Magh* is the spelling often used by writers who hold that the name means "Hill of the Plain".'—John Glynn.
14. On September 8, 1909, about a year after this testimony was given, Mr. —, our seer-witness, at his own home near Grange, told to me again the same essential facts concerning his psychical experiences as during my first interview with him, and even repeated word for word the expressions the 'gentry' used in communicating with him. Therefore I feel that he is thoroughly sincere in his beliefs and descriptions, whatever various readers may think of them. As his neighbours said to me about him—and I interviewed a good many of them—'Some give in to him and some do not'; but they always spoke of him with respect, though a few naturally consider him eccentric. At the time of our second meeting (which gave me a chance to revise the evidence as first taken down) Mr. —made this additional statement:—'The *gentry* do not tell all their secrets, and I do not understand many things about them, nor can I be sure that everything I tell concerning them is exact.'
15. A learned and more careful Irish seer thinks this head-dress should really be described as an aura.
16. I have been told by a friend in California, who is a student of psychical sciences, that there exist in certain parts of that state, notably in the Yosemite Valley, as the Red Men seem to have known, according to their traditions, invisible races exactly comparable to the 'gentry' of this Ben Bulbin country such as our seer-witness describes them and as other seers in Ireland have described them, and quite like the 'people of peace' as described by Kirk, the seventh son, in his *Secret Commonwealth* (see this study, p. 85 n.). These California races are said to exist now, as the Irish and Scotch invisible races are said to exist now, by seers who can behold them; and, like the latter races, are described as a distinct order of beings who have never been in physical embodiments. If we follow the traditions of the Red Men, the Yosemite invisible tribes are probably but a few of many such tribes scattered throughout the North American continent; and equally with their Celtic relatives they are described as a warlike race with more than human powers over physical nature, and as able to subject or destroy men.
17. This refers to a tale told by Hugh Currid, in August, 1908, about Father Patrick and Father Dominick, which is here omitted because re-investigation during my second visit to Grange, in September, 1909, showed the tale to have been incorrectly reported. The same story, however, based upon facts, according to several reliable witnesses, was more accurately told by Patrick Waters at the time of my re-investigation, and appears on page 51.
18. It happened that I had in my pocket a fossil, picked out of the neighbouring sea-cliff rocks, which are very rich in fossils. I showed this to Pat to ascertain if what he had had in his hand looked anything like it, and he at once said 'No'.
19. After this Ossianic fragment, which has been handed down orally, I asked Pat if he had ever heard the old people talk about Dermot and Grania, and he replied:—'To be sure I have. Dermot

and Grania used to live in these parts. Dermot stole Finn MacCoul's sister, and had to flee away. He took with him a bag of sand and a bunch of heather; and when he was in the mountains he would put the bag of sand under his head at night, and then tell everybody he met that he had slept on the sand (the sea-shore); and when on the sand he would use the bunch of heather for a pillow, and say he had slept on the heather (the mountains). And so nobody ever caught him at all.'

20. As to probable proof that there was an Atlantis, see p. 333 n.
21. This refers to Robert Kirk, minister of Aberfoyle, who wrote *The Secret Commonwealth* (see this study, p. 85 n.).
22. In going from East Ireland to Galway, during the summer of 1908, I passed through the country near Mullingar, where there was then great excitement over a leprechaun which had been appearing to school-children and to many of the country-folk. I talked with some of the people as I walked through part of County Meath about this leprechaun, and most of them were certain that there could be such a creature showing itself; and I noticed, too, that they were all quite anxious to have a chance at the money-bag, if they could only see the little fellow with it. I told one good-natured old Irishman at Ballywillan—where I stopped over night—as we sat round his peat fire and pot of boiling potatoes, that the leprechaun was reported as captured by the police in Mullingar. 'Now that couldn't be, at all,' he said instantly, 'for everybody knows the leprechaun is a spirit and can't be caught by any blessed policeman, though it is likely one might get his gold if they got him cornered so he had no chance to run away. But the minute you wink or take your eyes off the little devil, sure enough he is gone.'
23. Cf. David Fitzgerald, *Popular Tales of Ireland*, in *Rev. Celt.*, iv. 185–92; and *All the Year Round*, New Series, iii. 'This woman guardian of the lake is called Toice Bhrean, "untidy" or "lazy wench". According to a local legend, she is said to have been originally the guardian of the sacred well, from which, owing to her neglect, Lough Gur issued; and in this rôle she corresponds to Liban, daughter of Eochaidh Finn, the guardian of the sacred well from which issued Lough Neagh, according to the *Dinnshenchas* and the tale of Eochaidh MacMairido.'—J. F. Lynch.
24. It was on the bank of the little river Camóg, which flows near Lough Gur, that the Earl of Desmond one day saw Aine as she sat there combing her hair. Overcome with love for the fairy-goddess, he gained control over her through seizing her cloak, and made her his wife. From this union was born the enchanted son Geróid Iarla, even as Galahad was born to Lancelot by the Lady of the Lake. When Geróid had grown into young manhood, in order to surpass a woman he leaped right into a bottle and right out again, and this happened in the midst of a banquet in his father's castle. His father, the earl, had been put under taboo by Aine never to show surprise at anything her magician son might do, but now the taboo was forgotten, and hence broken, amid so unusual a performance; and immediately Geróid left the feasting and went to the lake. As soon as its water touched him he assumed the form of a goose, and he went swimming over the surface of the Lough, and disappeared on Garrod Island.

According to one legend, Aine, like the Breton *Morgan*, may sometimes be seen combing her hair, only half her body appearing above the lake. And in times of calmness and clear water,

according to another legend, one may behold beneath Aine's lake the lost enchanted castle of her son Geróid, close to Garrod Island—so named from Geróid or 'Gerald'.

Geróid lives there in the under-lake world to this day, awaiting the time of his normal return to the world of men (see our chapter on re-birth, p. 386). But once in every seven years, on clear moonlight nights, he emerges temporarily, when the Lough Gur peasantry see him as a phantom mounted on a phantom white horse, leading a phantom or fairy cavalcade across the lake and land. A well-attested case of such an apparitional appearance of the earl has been recorded by Miss Anne Baily, the percipient having been Teigue O'Neill, an old blacksmith whom she knew (see *All the Year Round*, New Series, iii. 495–6, London, 1870). And Moll Riall, a young woman also known to Miss Baily, saw the phantom earl by himself, under very weird circumstances, by day, as she stood at the margin of the lake washing clothes (ib., p. 496).

Some say that Aine's true dwelling-place is in her hill; upon which on every St. John's Night the peasantry used to gather from all the immediate neighbourhood to view the moon (for Aine seems to have been a moon goddess, like Diana), and then with torches (*cliars*) made of bunches of straw and hay tied on poles used to march in procession from the hill and afterwards run through cultivated fields and amongst the cattle. The underlying purpose of this latter ceremony probably was—as is the case in the Isle of Man and in Brittany (see pp. 124 n., 273), where corresponding fire-ceremonies surviving from an ancient agricultural cult are still celebrated—to exorcise the land from all evil spirits and witches in order that there may be good harvests and rich increase of flocks. Sometimes on such occasions the goddess herself has been seen leading the sacred procession (cf. the Bacchus cult among the ancient Greeks, who believed that the god himself led his worshippers in their sacred torch-light procession at night, he being like Aine in this respect, more or less connected with fertility in nature). One night some girls staying on the hill late were made to look through a magic ring by Aine, and lo the hill was crowded with the folk of the fairy goddess who before had been invisible. The peasants always said that Aine is 'the best-hearted woman that ever lived' (cf. David Fitzgerald, *Popular Tales of Ireland*, in *Rev. Celt.*, iv. 185–92).

In *Silva Gadelica* (ii. 347–8), Aine is a daughter of Eogabal, a king of the Tuatha De Danann, and her abode is within the *sidh*, named on her account '*Aine cliach*, now Cnoc Aine, or Knockany'. In another passage we read that Manannan took Aine as his wife (ib., ii. 197). Also see in *Silva Gadelica*, ii, pp. 225, 576.

25. 'In some local tales the *Bean-tighe*, or *Bean a'tighe* is termed *Bean-sidhe* (Banshee), and *Bean Chaointe*, or "wailing woman", and is identified with Aine. In an elegy by Ferriter on one of the Fitzgeralds, we read:—

Aine from her closely hid nest did awake,  
The woman of wailing from Gur's voicy lake.

'Thomas O'Connellan, the great minstrel bard, some of whose compositions are given by Hardiman, died at Lough Gur Castle about 1700, and was buried at New Church beside the lake. It is locally believed that Aine stood on a rock of Knock Adoon and "keened" O'Connellan whilst the funeral procession was passing from the castle to the place of burial.'—J. F. Lynch.

A Banshee was traditionally attached to the Baily family of Lough Gur; and one night at dead of night, when Miss Kitty Baily was dying of consumption, her two sisters, Miss Anne Baily and Miss Susan Baily, who were sitting in the death chamber, 'heard such sweet and melancholy music as they had never heard before. It seemed to them like distant cathedral music.... The music was not in the house.... It seemed to come through the windows of the old castle, high in the air.' But when Miss Anne, who went downstairs with a lighted candle to investigate the weird phenomenon, had approached the ruined castle she thought the music came from above the house; 'and thus perplexed, and at last frightened, she returned.' Both sisters are on record as having distinctly heard the fairy music, and for a long time (*All the Year Round*, New Series, iii. 496–7; London, 1870).

26. 'The *Buachailleen* is most likely one of the many forms assumed by the shape-shifting Fer Fi, the Lough Gur Dwarf, who at Tara, according to the *Dinnshenchas* of Tuag Inbir (see *Folk-Lore*, iii; and A. Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, i. 195 ff.), took the shape of a woman; and we may trace the tales of Geróid Iarla to Fer Fi, who, and not Geróid, is believed by the oldest of the Lough Gur peasantry to be the owner of the lake. Fer Fi is the son of Eogabal of Sídh Eogabail, and hence brother to Aine. He is also foster-son of Manannan Mac Lir, and a Druid of the Tuatha De Danann (cf. *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 225; also *Dinnshenchas* of Tuag Inbir). At Lough Gur various tales are told by the peasants concerning the Dwarf, and he is still stated by them to be the brother of Aine. For the sake of experiment I once spoke very disrespectfully of the Dwarf to John Punch, an old man, and he said to me in a frightened whisper: "Whisht! he'll hear you." Edward Fitzgerald and other old men were very much afraid of the Dwarf.'—J. F. Lynch.
27. 'Compare the tale of Excalibur, the Sword of King Arthur, which King Arthur before his death ordered Sir Bedivere to cast into the lake whence it had come.'—J. F. Lynch.
28. 'It is commonly believed by young and old at Lough Gur that a human being is drowned in the Lake once every seven years, and that it is the *Bean Fhionn*, or "White Lady" who thus *takes* the person.'—J. F. Lynch.
29. It was the belief of the Rev. Robert Kirk, as expressed by him in his *Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies*, that the fairy tribes are a distinct order of created beings possessing human-like intelligence and supernormal powers, who live and move about in this world invisible to all save men and women of the second-sight (see this study, pp. 89, 91 n.).
30. The Rev. Robert Kirk, in his *Secret Commonwealth*, defines the second-sight, which enabled him to see the 'good people', as 'a rapture, transport, and sort of death'. He and our present witness came into the world with this abnormal faculty; but there is the remarkable case to record of the late Father Allen Macdonald, who during a residence of twenty years on the tiny and isolated Isle of Erisgey, Western Hebrides, acquired the second-sight, and was able some years before he died there (in 1905) to exercise it as freely as though he had been a natural-born seer.
31. In his note to *Le Chant des Trépassés* (*Barzaz Breiz*, p. 507), Villemarqué reports that in some localities in Lower Brittany on All Saints Night libations of milk are poured over the tombs of the dead. This is proof that the nature of fairies in Scotland and of the dead in Brittany is thought to be the same.

32. 'In many parts of the Highlands, where the same deity is known, the stone into which women poured the libation of milk is called *Leac na Gruagaich*, "Flag-stone of the Gruagach." If the libation was omitted in the evening, the best cow in the fold would be found dead in the morning.'—Alexander Carmichael.
33. Dr. George Henderson, in *The Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland* (Glasgow, 1901), p. 101, says:—'*Shony* was a sea-god in Lewis, where ale was sacrificed to him at Hallowtide. After coming to the church of St. Mulvay at night a man was sent to wade into the sea, saying: "Shony, I give you this cup of ale hoping that you will be so kind as to give us plenty of sea-ware for enriching our ground the ensuing year." As *ō* from Norse would become *o*, and *fn* becomes *nn*, one thinks of *Sjöfn*, one of the goddesses in the Edda. In any case the word is Norse.' It seems, therefore, that the Celtic stock in Lewis have adopted the name *Shony* or *Shoney*, and possibly also the god it designates, through contact with Norsemen; but, at all events, they have assimilated him to their own fairy pantheon, as we can see in their celebrating special libations to him on the ancient Celtic feast of the dead and fairies, Halloween.
34. This, as Dr. Carmichael told me, I believe very justly represents the present state of folk-lore in many parts of the Highlands. There are, it is true, old men and women here and there who know much about fairies, but they, fearing the ridicule of a younger and 'educated' generation, are generally unwilling to admit any belief in fairies.
35. The following note by Miss Tolmie is of great interest and value, especially when one bears in mind Cuchulainn's traditional relation with Skye (see p. 4):—'The Koolian range should never be written *Cu-chullin*. The name is written here with a K, to ensure its being correctly uttered and written. It is probably a Norse word; but, as yet, a satisfactory explanation of its origin and meaning has not been published. In Gaelic the range is always alluded to (in the masculine singular) as the Koolian.'
36. Dr. Alexander Carmichael found that the scene of this widespread tale is variously laid, in Argyll, in Perth, in Inverness, and in other counties of the Highlands. From his own collection of folk-songs he contributes the following verses to illustrate the song (existing in numerous versions), which the maiden while invisible used to sing to the cows of Colin:—

*Crodh Chailean! crodh Chailean!*  
*Crodh Chailean mo ghaoil,*  
*Crodh Chailean mo chridhe,*  
 Air lighe cheare fraoish.

(Cows of Colin! cows of Colin!  
 Cows of Colin of my love,  
 Cows of Colin of my heart,  
 In colour of the heather-hen.)

In one of Dr. Carmichael's versions, 'Colin's wife and her infant child had been lifted away by the fairies to a fairy bower in the glen between the hills.' There she was kept nursing the babes which the fairies had stolen, until 'upon Hallow Eve, when all the bowers were open', Colin by placing a steel tinder above the lintel of the door to the fairy bower was enabled to enter the bower and in safety lead forth his wife and child.

37. In this beautiful fairy legend we recognize the fairy woman as one of the Tuatha De Danann-like fairies—one of the women of the *Sidhe*, as Irish seers call them.
38. It is interesting to know that the present inhabitants of Barra, or at least most of them, are the descendants of Irish colonists who belonged to the clan Eoichidh of County Cork, and who emigrated from there to Barra in A. D. 917. They brought with them their old customs and beliefs, and in their isolation their children have kept these things alive in almost their primitive Celtic purity. For example, besides their belief in fairies, May Day, Baaltine, and November Eve are still rigorously observed in the pagan way, and so is Easter—for it, too, before being claimed by Christianity, was a sun festival. And how beautiful it is in this age to see the youths and maidens and some of the elders of these simple-hearted Christian fisher-folk climb to the rocky heights of their little island-home on Easter morn to salute the sun as it rises out of the mountains to the east, and to hear them say that the sun dances with joy that morning because the Christ is risen. In a similar way they salute the new moon, making as they do so the sign of the cross. Finn Barr is said to have been a County Cork man of great sanctity; and he probably came to Barra with the colony, for he is the patron saint of the island, and hence its name. (To my friend, Mr. Michael Buchanan, of Barra, I am indebted for this history and these traditions of his native isle.)
39. '*Sluagh*, "hosts," the spirit-world. The "hosts" are the spirits of mortals who have died.... According to one informant, the spirits fly about in great clouds, up and down the face of the world like the starlings, and come back to the scenes of their earthly transgressions. No soul of them is without the clouds of earth, dimming the brightness of the works of God, nor can any win heaven till satisfaction is made for the sins of earth.'—Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, ii. 330.
40. This curious tale suggests that certain of the fairy women who entice mortals to their love in modern times are much the same, if not the same, as the *succubi* of Middle-Age mystics. But it is not intended by this observation to confuse the higher orders of the *Sidhe* and all the fairy folk like the fays who come from Avalon with *succubi*; though *succubi* and fairy women in general were often confused and improperly identified the one with the other. It need not be urged in this example of a 'fairy woman' that we have to do not with a being of flesh and blood, whatever various readers may think of her.
41. "'Willy-the-Fairy," otherwise known as William Cain, is the musician referred to by the late Mr. John Nelson (p. 131). The latter's statement that William Cain played one of these fairy tunes at one of our Manx entertainments in Peel is perfectly correct.'—Sophia Morrison.
42. This is the Mid-world of Irish seers, who would be inclined to follow the Manx custom and call the fairies 'the People of the Middle World'.

43. 'May 11 == in Manx *Oie Voaldyn*, "May-day Eve." On this evening the fairies were supposed to be peculiarly active. To propitiate them and to ward off the influence of evil spirits, and witches, who were also active at this time, green leaves or boughs and *sumark* or primrose flowers were strewn on the threshold, and branches of the *cuirn* or mountain ash made into small crosses without the aid of a knife, which was on no account to be used (steel or iron in any form being taboo to fairies and spirits), and stuck over the doors of the dwelling-houses and cow-houses. Cows were further protected from the same influences by having the *Bollan-feaill-Eoin* (John's feast wort) placed in their stalls. This was also one of the occasions on which no one would give fire away, and on which fires were and are still lit on the hills to drive away the fairies.'—Sophia Morrison.
44. I am wholly indebted to Miss Morrison for these Manx verses and their translation, which I have substituted for Mrs. Moore's English rendering. Miss Morrison, after my return to Oxford, saw Mrs. Moore and took them down from her, a task I was not well fitted to do when the tale was told.
45. It has been suggested, and no doubt correctly, that these murmuring sounds heard on Dalby Mountain are due to the action of sea-waves, close at hand, washing over shifting masses of pebbles on the rock-bound shore. Though this be the true explanation of the phenomenon itself, it only proves the attribution of cause to be wrong, and not the underlying animistic conception of spiritual beings.
46. In this mythological role, Manannan is apparently a sun god or else the sun itself; and the Manx coat of arms, which is connected with him, being a sun symbol, suggests to us now ages long prior to history, when the Isle of Man was a Sacred Isle dedicated to the cult of the Supreme God of Light and Life, and when all who dwelt thereon were regarded as the Children of the Sun.
47. Sir John Rhÿs tells me that this Snowdon fairy-lore was contributed by the late Lady Rhÿs, who as a girl lived in the neighbourhood of Snowdon and heard very much from the old people there, most of whom believed in the fairies; and she herself then used to be warned, in the manner mentioned, against being carried away into the under-lake Fairyland.
48. Cf. *Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx*, pp. 683–4 n., where Sir John Rhÿs says of his friend, Professor A. C. Haddon:—"I find also that he, among others, has anticipated me in my theory as to the origins of the fairies: witness the following extract from the syllabus of a lecture delivered by him at Cardiff in 1894 on *Fairy Tales*:—"What are the fairies?—Legendary origin of the fairies. It is evident from fairy literature that there is a mixture of the possible and the impossible, of fact and fancy. Part of fairydom refers to (1) spirits that never were embodied: other fairies are (2) spirits of environment, nature or local spirits, and household or domestic spirits; (3) spirits of the organic world, spirits of plants, and spirits of animals; (4) spirits of men, or ghosts; and (5) witches and wizards, or men possessed with other spirits. All these, and possibly other elements, enter into the fanciful aspects of Fairyland, but there is a large residuum of real occurrences; these point to a clash of races, and we may regard many of these fairy sagas as stories told by men of the Iron Age of events which happened to men of the Bronze Age in their conflicts with men of the Neolithic Age, and possibly these, too, handed on traditions of the Paleolithic Age."'"

49. This is the one tale I have found in North Wales about a midwife and fairies—a type of tale common to West Ireland, Isle of Man, Cornwall, and Brittany, but in a reverse version, the midwife there being (as she is sometimes in Welsh versions) one of the human race called in by fairies. If evidence of the oneness of the Celtic mind were needed we should find it here (cf. pp. 50, 54, 127, 175, 182, 205). There are in this type of fairy-tale, as the advocates of the Pygmy Theory may well hold, certain elements most likely traceable to a folk-memory of some early race, or special class of some early race, who knew the secrets of midwifery and the use of medicines when such knowledge was considered magical. But in each example of this midwife story there is the germ idea—no matter what other ideas cluster round it—that fairies, like spirits, are only to be seen by an extra-human vision, or, as psychical researchers might say, by clairvoyance.
50. After this remarkable story, Mrs. Jones told me about another very rare psychical experience of her own, which is here recorded because it illustrates the working of the psychological law of the association of ideas:—‘My husband, Price Jones, was drowned some forty years ago, within four miles of Arms Head, near Bangor, on Friday at midday; and that night at about one o’clock he appeared to me in our bedroom and laid his head on my breast. I tried to ask him where he came from, but before I could get my breath he was gone. I believed at the time that he was out at sea perfectly safe and well. But next day, Saturday, at about noon, a message came announcing his death. I was as fully awake as one can be when I thus saw the spirit of my husband. He returned to me a second time about six months later.’ Had this happened in West Ireland, it is almost certain that public opinion would have declared that Price Jones had been *taken* by the ‘gentry’ or ‘good people’.
51. Here we find the *Tylwyth Teg* showing quite the same characteristics as Welsh elves in general, as Cornish pixies, and as Breton *corrigans*, or *lutins*; that is, given to dancing at night, to stealing children, and to deceiving travellers.
52. This folk-belief partially sustains the view put forth in our chapter on Environment, that St. David’s during pagan times was already a sacred spot and perhaps then the seat of a druidic oracle.
53. Here we have an example of the *Tylwyth Teg* being identified with a prehistoric race, quite in accordance with the argument of the Pygmy Theory. We have, however, as the essential idea, that the *Tylwyth Teg* heard singing were the spirits of this prehistoric race. Thus our contention that ancestral spirits play a leading part in the fairy-belief is sustained, and the Pygmy Theory appears quite at its true relative value—as able to explain one subordinate ethnological strand in the complex fabric of the belief.
54. This story is much like the one recorded by Giraldus Cambrensis about a boy going to Fairyland and returning to his mother (see this study, p. 324). The possibility that it may be an independent version of the folk-tale told to Cambrensis which has continued to live on among the people makes it highly interesting.

Mr. Jones gives further evidence on the re-birth doctrine in Wales (pp. 388–9), and concerning Merlin and sacrifice to appease place-spirits (pp. 436–7).



55. As a result of his researches, the Rev. T. M. Morgan has just published a new work, entitled *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Newchurch* (Carmarthen, 1910).
56. In these last two anecdotes, as in modern 'Spiritualism', we observe a popular practice of necromancy or the calling up of spirits, so-called 'materialization' of spirits, and spirit communication through a human 'medium', who is the *dyn hysbys*, as well as divination, the revealing of things hidden and the foretelling of future events. This is direct evidence that Welsh fairies or the *Tylwyth Teg* were formerly the same to Welshmen as spirits are to Spiritualists now. We seem, therefore, to have proof of our Psychological Theory (see chap. xi).
57. Here we have a combination of many distinct elements and influences. As among mortals, so among the *Tylwyth Teg* there is a king; and this conception may have arisen directly from anthropomorphic influences on the ancient Brythonic religion, or it may have come directly from druidic teachings. The locating of *Gwydion ab Don*, like a god, in a heaven-world, rather than like his counterpart, *Gwynn ab Nudd*, in a hades-world, is probably due to a peculiar admixture of Druidism and Christianity: at first, both gods were probably druidic or pagan, and the same, but *Gwynn ab Nudd* became a demon or evil god under Christian influences, while *Gwydion ab Don* seems to have curiously retained his original good reputation in spite of Christianity (cf. p. 320). The name *Gwenhidw* reminds us at once of Arthur's queen *Gwenhwyvar* or 'White Apparition'; and the sheep of *Gwenhidw* can properly be explained by the Naturalistic Theory. It seems, however, that analogy was imaginatively suggested between the Queen *Gwenhidw* as resembling the Welsh White Lady or a ghost-like being, and her sheep, the clouds, also of a necessarily ghost-like character. All this is an admirable illustration of the great complexity of the Fairy-Faith.
58. The parallel between this Welsh method of conferring vision and the Breton method is very striking (cf. p. 215).
59. This is the substance of the story as it was told to me by a gentleman who lives within sight of the farm where the image is said to have been found. And one day he took me to the house and showed me the room and the place in the wall where the find was made. The old manor is one of the solidest and most picturesque of its kind in Wales, and, in spite of its extreme age, well preserved. He, being as a native Welshman of the locality well acquainted with its archaeology, thinks it safe to place an age of six to eight hundred years on the manor. What is interesting about this matter of age arises from the query, Was the image one of the Virgin or of some Christian saint, or was it a Druid idol? Both opinions are current in the neighbourhood, but there is a good deal in favour of the second. The region, the little valley on whose side stands the Pentre Evan Cromlech, the finest in Britain, is believed to have been a favourite place with the ancient Druids; and in the oak groves which still exist there tradition says there was once a flourishing pagan school for neophytes, and that the cromlech instead of being a place for interments or for sacrifices was in those days completely enclosed, forming like other cromlechs a darkened chamber in which novices when initiated were placed for a certain number of days—the interior being called the 'Womb or Court of Ceridwen'.
60. The same remedy is prescribed in Brittany when mischievous *lutins* or *corrigans* lead a traveller astray, in Ireland when the *good people* lead a traveller astray; and at Rollright, Oxfordshire,

England, an old woman told me that it is efficacious against being led astray through witchcraft. Obviously the fairy and witch spell are alike.

61. The same sort of a story as this is told in Lower Brittany, where the *corrigans* or *lutins* slaughter a farmer's fat cow or ox and invite the farmer to partake of the feast it provides. If he does so with good grace and humour, he finds his cow or ox perfectly whole in the morning, but if he refuses to join the feast or joins it unwillingly, in the morning he is likely to find his cow or ox actually dead and eaten.
62. See Sir John Rhys, *Celtic Folk-Lore: Welsh and Manx* (Oxford, 1901), *passim*.
63. The *New English Dictionary*, s.v. *Pixy*, gives rather vaguely a Swedish dialect word, *pysg*, a small fairy. It also mentions *pix* as a Devon imprecation, 'a pix take him.' I suspect the last is only an *umlaut* form of a common Shakespearean imprecation. If not, it is interesting, and reminds one of the fate of Margery Dawe, 'Piskies came and carr'd her away.'
64. 'Some say that the Phoenicians never came to Cornwall at all, and that their Ictis was Vectis (the Isle of Wight) or even Thanet.'—Henry Jenner.
65. 'This is, I think, the usual Cornish belief.'—Henry Jenner.
66. 'About Porth Curnow and the Logan Rock there are little spots of earth in the face of the granite cliffs where sea-daisies (thrift) and other wild flowers grow. These are referred to the sea pisky, and are known as "piskies' gardens.'"—Henry Jenner.
67. I was told by another Cornishman that, in a spirit of municipal rivalry and fun, the Penzance people like to taunt the people of Newlyn (now almost a suburb of Penzance) by calling them *Buccas*, and that the Newlyn townsmen very much resent being so designated. Thus what no doubt was originally an ancient cult to some local sea-divinity called *Bucca*, has survived as folk-humour. (See Mr. Jenner's Introduction, p. 164.)
68. 'Another version, which is more usual, is that the pisky anointed the person's eyes and so rendered itself visible.'—Henry Jenner.
69. This is a natural outcropping of greenstone on a commanding hill just above the vicarage in Newlyn, and concerning it many weird legends survive. In pre-Christian times it was probably one of the Cornish sacred spots for the celebration of ancient rites—probably in honour of the Sun—and for divination.
70. For more about the Tolcarne Troll see chapter on Celtic Re-birth p. 391.
71. Mr. John B. Cornish, solicitor, of Penzance, told me that when he once suggested to an old miner who fully believed in the 'knockers', that the noises they were supposed to make were due to material causes, the old miner became quite annoyed, and said, 'Well, I guess I have ears to hear.'
72. For the Cornish folk-lore already published by Miss M. A. Courtney, the reader is referred to her work, *Cornish Feasts and Folk-Lore* (Penzance, 1890).
73. A curious holed stone standing between two low menhirs on the moors beyond the Lanyon Dolmen, near Madron; but in Borlase's time (cf. his *Antiquities of Cornwall*, ed. 1769, p. 177) the three stones were not as now in a direct line. The Men-an-Tol has aroused much speculation

among archaeologists as to its probable use or meaning. No doubt it was astronomical and religious in its significance; and it may have been a calendar stone with which ancient priests took sun observations (cf. Sir Norman Lockyer, *Stonehenge and Other Stone Monuments*); or it may have been otherwise related to a sun cult, or to some pagan initiatory rites.

74. I asked what a nath is, and Mr. Spragg explained:—‘A nath is a bird with a beak like that of a parrot, and with black and grey feathers. The naths live on sea-islands in holes like rabbits, and before they start to fly they first run.’ The nath, as Mr. Henry Jenner informs me, is the same as the puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), called also in Cornwall a ‘sea parrot’.
75. Sometimes it is necessary to turn your coat inside out. A Zennor man said that to do the same thing with your socks or stockings is as good. In Ireland this strange psychological state of going astray comes from walking over a fairy domain, over a confusing-sod, or getting into a fairy pass.
76. Cf. F. M. Luzel, *Contes populaires de Basse-Bretagne* (Paris, 1887), i. 177–97; following the account of Ann Drann, a servant at Coat-Fual, Plouguernevel (Côtes-du-Nord), November 1855.
77. My Breton friend, M. Goulven Le Scour, was born November 20, 1851, at Kerouledic in Plouneventer, Finistère. He is an antiquarian, a poet, and, as we shall see, a folk-lorist of no mean ability. In 1902, at the *Congrès d’Auray* of Breton poets and singers, he won two prizes for poetry, and, in 1901, a prize at the *Congrès de Quimperlé* or *Concours de Recueils poétiques*.
78. This story concerns persons still living, and, at M. Le Scour’s suggestion, I have omitted their names.
79. By a Carnac family I was afterwards given a sprig of such blessed box-wood, and was assured that its exorcizing power is still recognized by all old Breton families, most of whom seem to possess branches of it.
80. This idea seems related to the one in the popular Morbihan legend of how St. Cornely, the patron saint of the country and the saint who presides over the Alignements and domestic horned animals, changed into upright stones the pagan forces opposing him when he arrived near Carnac; and these stones are now the famous Alignements of Carnac.
81. Luzel, op. cit., iii. 226–311; i. 128–218; ii. 349–54.
82. Ib., ii. 269; cf. our study, p. 93.
83. According to the annotations to a legend recorded by Villemarqué, in his *Barzaz Breiz*, pp. 39–44, and entitled the *Submersion de la Ville d’Is*, St. Guenolé was traditionally the founder of the first monastery raised in Armorica; and Dahut the princess stole the key from her sleeping father in order fittingly to crown a banquet and midnight debaucheries which were being held in honour of her lover, the Black Prince.
84. Luzel, op. cit., ii. 257–68; i. 3–13.
85. P. Sébillot, *Traditions et superstitions de la Haute-Bretagne* (Paris, 1882), i. 100.
86. General references: Sébillot, ib.; and his *Folk-Lore de France* (Paris, 1905).

87. Sébillot, *Traditions et superstitions de la Haute-Bretagne*, i. 73–4.
88. *Ib.*, i. 102, 103–4.
89. Sébillot, *Traditions et superstitions de la Haute-Bretagne*, i. 83.
90. *Ib.*, i. 90–1.
91. Cf. *ib.*, i. 109.
92. Cf. *ib.*, i. 74–5, &c.
93. Cf. Sébillot, *Traditions et superstitions de la Haute-Bretagne*, i. 74–5, &c.
94. In Lower Brittany the *corrigan* tribes collectively are commonly called *Corrikêt*, masculine plural of *Corrik*, diminutive of *Corr*, meaning ‘Dwarf’; or *Corriganed*, feminine plural of *Corrigan*, meaning ‘Little Dwarf’. Many other forms are in use. (Cf. R. F. Le Men, *Trad. et supers. de la Basse-Bretagne*, in *Rev. Celt.*, i. 226–7.)
95. Cf. *Foyer breton*, i. 199.
96. By ‘E. R.’, in *Mélusine* (Paris), i. 114.
97. This account about *corrigans*, more rational than any preceding it, may possibly refer to a dream or trance-like state of mind on the part of the young girl; and if it does, we can then compare the presence of a mortal at this *corrigan* sabbath, or even at the ordinary witches’ sabbath, to the presence of a mortal in Fairyland. And according to popular Breton belief, as reliable peasants assure me, during dreams, trance, or ecstasy, the soul is supposed to depart from the body and actually see spirits of all kinds in another world, and to be then under their influence. While many details in the more conventional *corrigan* stories appear to reflect a folk-memory of religious dances and songs, and racial, social, and traditional usages of the ancient Bretons, the animistic background of them could conceivably have originated from psychical experiences such as this girl is supposed to have had.
98. Villemarqué, *Barzaz Breiz* (Paris, 1867), pp. 33, 35.
99. J. Loth, in *Annales de Bretagne* (Rennes), x. 78–81.
100. E. Renan, *Essais de morale et de critique* (Paris, 1859), p. 451.
101. In Ireland it is commonly held that a seer beholding a fairy can make a non-seer see it also by coming into bodily *rapprochement* with the non-seer (cf. p. 152).
102. It is sometimes believed that phantom washerwomen are undergoing penance for having wilfully brought on an abortion by their work, or else for having strangled their babe.
103. Every parish in the uncorrupted parts of Brittany has its own *Ankou*, who is the last man to die in the parish during the year. Each King of the Dead, therefore, never holds office for more than twelve months, since during that period he is certain to have a successor. Sometimes the *Ankou* is Death itself personified. In the Morbihan, the *Ankou* occasionally may be seen as an apparition entering a house where a death is about to occur; though more commonly he is never seen, his knocking only is heard, which is the rule in Finistère. In Welsh mythology, Gwynn ab Nudd, king of the world of the dead, is represented as playing a rôle parallel to that of the

Breton *Ankou*, when he goes forth with his fierce hades-hounds hunting the souls of the dying. (Cf. Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 155.)

104. Cf. A. Le Braz, *La Légende de la Mort*; Introduction by L. Marillier (Paris, 1893), pp. 31, 40.
105. Cf. Le Braz, *La Légende de la Mort*; Introduction by Marillier, pp. 47, 46, 7–8, 40, 45, 46.
106. Cf. Le Braz, *La Légende de la Mort*; Introduction by Marillier, p. 43.
107. *Ib.*; Notes by G. Dottin (Paris, 1902), p. 44.
108. *Ib.*; Introduction by Marillier, pp. 19, 23, 68.
109. Cf. *ib.*; Introduction by Marillier, pp. 53 ff., 68.
110. A Breton night's entertainment held in a peasant's cottage, stable, or other warm outhouse. In parts of the Morbihan and of Finistère where the old Celtic life has escaped modern influences, almost every winter night the Breton Celts, like their cousins in very isolated parts of West Ireland and in the Western Hebrides, find their chief enjoyment in story-telling festivals, some of which I have been privileged to attend.
111. The word in the MS. is *boiteux*, and in relation to a devil or demon this seems to be the proper rendering.
112. B. Spencer and F. T. Gillen, *Nat. Tribes of Cent. Aust.* (London, 1899), chapters xi, xv.
113. R. H. Codrington, *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.* x. 261; *The Melanesians* (Oxford, 1891), pp. 123, 151, &c.; also cf. F. W. Christian, *The Caroline Islands* (London, 1899), pp. 281 ff., &c.
114. H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (London, 1868), pp. 226–7.
115. C. G. Leland, *Memoirs* (London, 1893), i. 34.
116. R. C. Temple, *Legends of the Panjab*, in *Folk-Lore*, x. 395.
117. W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic* (London, 1900), *passim*.
118. Hardouin, *Traditions et superstitions siamoises*, in *Rev. Trad. Pop.*, v. 257–67.
119. Ella G. Sykes, *Persian Folklore*, in *Folk-Lore*, xii. 263.
120. I am directly indebted for this information to a friend who is a member of Lincoln College, Oxford, Mr. Mohammed Said Loutfy, of Barkein, Lower Egypt. Mr. Loutfy has come into frequent and very intimate contact with these animistic beliefs in his country, and he tells me that they are common to all classes of almost all races in modern Egypt. The common Egyptian spellings are *afreet*, in the singular, and *afaareet* in the plural, for spiritual beings, who are usually described by percipients as of pygmy stature, but as being able to assume various sizes and shapes. The *djinn*s, on the contrary, are described as tall spiritual beings possessing great power.
121. J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folk-Lore* (Cambridge, 1910), pp. 131–7, 139–46, 163.
122. L. Sainéan, *Les Fées méchantes d'après les croyances du peuple roumain*, in *Mélusine*, x. 217–26, 243–54.

123. Cf. C. G. Leland, *Etruscan Roman Remains in Pop. Trad.* (London, 1892), pp. 162, 165, 223, &c.

124. H. C. Coote, *The Neo-Latin Fay*, in *Folk-Lore Record*, ii. 1–18.

125. We cannot here attempt to present, even in outline, all the complex ethnological arguments for and against the existence in prehistoric times of European pygmy races. Attention ought, however, to be called to the remarkable finds recently made in the *Grotte des Enfants*, at Mentone, France. A certain number of well-preserved skeletons of probably the earliest men who dwelt on the present land surface of Europe, which were found there, suggest that different racial stocks, possibly in succession, have preceded the Aryan stock. The first race, as indicated by two small negroid-looking skeletons of a woman, 1,580 mm. (62·21 inches), and of a boy 1,540 mm. (60·63 inches) in height, found in the lowest part of the *Grotte*, was probably Ethiopian. The succeeding race was probably Mongolian, judging from other remains found in another part of the same *Grotte*, and especially from the Chancelade skeleton with its distinctly Eskimo appearance, only 1,500 mm. (59·06 inches) high, discovered near Perigneux, France. The race succeeding this one was possibly the one out of which our own Aryan race evolved. In relation to the Pygmy Theory these recent finds are of the utmost significance. They confirm Dr. Windle's earlier conclusion, that, contrary to the argument advanced to support the Pygmy Theory, the neolithic races of Central Europe were not true pygmies—a people whose average stature does not exceed four feet nine inches (cf. BC A. Windle, *Tyson's Pygmies of the Ancients*, London, 1894, Introduction). And, furthermore, these finds show, as far as any available ethnological data can, that there are no good reasons for believing that European and, therefore, Celtic lands were once dominated by pygmies even in epochs so remote that we can only calculate them in tens of thousands of years. Nevertheless, it is very highly probable that a folk-memory of Lappish, Pictish, or other small but not true pygmy races, has superficially coloured the modern fairy traditions of Northern Scotland, of the Western Hebrides (where what may prove to have been Lapps' or Picts' houses undoubtedly remain), of Northern Ireland, of the Isle of Man, and slightly, if indeed at all, the fairy traditions of other parts of the Celtic world (cf. David MacRitchie, *The Testimony of Tradition*, London, 1890; and his criticism of our own Psychological Theory, in the *Celtic Review*, October 1909 and January 1910, entitled respectively, *A New Solution of the Fairy Problem*, and *Druids and Mound-Dwellers*).

Again, the very small flint implements frequently found in Celtic lands and elsewhere have perhaps very reasonably been attributed to a long-forgotten pygmy race; though we must bear in mind in this connexion that it would be very unwise to conclude definitely that no race save a small-statured race could have made and used such implements: American Red Men were, when discovered by Europeans, and still are, making and using the tiniest of arrow-heads, precisely the same in size and design as those found in Celtic lands and attributed to pygmies. The use of small flint implements for special purposes, e.g. arrows for shooting small game like birds, for spearing fish, and for use in warfare as poisoned arrows, seems to have been common to most primitive peoples of normal stature. Contemporary pygmy races, far removed from Celtic lands, are also using them, and no doubt their prehistoric ancestors used them likewise.

126. J. G. Campbell, *The Fians* (London, 1891), p. 239. An Irish dwarf is minutely described in *Silva Gadelica* (ii. 116), O'Grady's translation. Again, in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (B. XII. cc.

i-ii) a dwarf is mentioned.

127. Campbell, *The Fians*, p. 265.
128. S. H. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica* (London, 1892), ii. 199.
129. Commentary on the *Senchas Már*, i. 70–1, Stokes's translation, in *Rev. Celt.*, i. 256–7.
130. Sir John Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures* (London, 1888), p. 592. Dwarfs supernatural in character also appear in the *Mabinogion*, and one of them is an attendant on King Arthur. In Bérout's *Tristan*, Frocin, a dwarf, is skilled in astrology and magic, and in the version by Thomas we find a similar reference.
131. Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> i. 385.
132. Cf. Windle, op. cit., Intro., p. 57.
133. Hunt, *Anthrop. Mem.*, ii. 294; cf. Windle, op. cit., Intro., p. 57.
134. Smith, *Myths of the Iroquois*, in *Amer. Bur. Eth.*, ii. 65.
135. Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 329.
136. Monier-Williams, *Brāhminism and Hindūism* (London, 1887), p. 236.
137. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 152.
138. *Dwarfs in the East*, in *Folk-Lore*, iv. 401–2.
139. Lacouperie, *Babylonian and Oriental Record*, v; cf. Windle, op. cit., Intro., pp. 21–2.
140. A. H. S. Landor, *Alone with the Hairy Ainu* (London, 1893), p. 251; also Windle, op. cit., Intro., pp. 22–4.
141. J. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup> (London, 1900), i. 248 ff.
142. Cf. A. Wiedemann, *Ancient Egyptian Doctrine Immortality* (London, 1895), p. 12.
143. Cf. A. E. Crawley, *Idea of the Soul* (London, 1909), p. 186.
144. Examples are in Orcagna's fresco of 'The Triumph of Death', in the Campo Santo of Pisa (cf. A. Wiedemann, *Anc. Egy. Doct. Immort.*, p. 34 ff.); and over the porch of the Cathedral Church of St. Trophimus, at Arles.
145. Cf. Crawley, op. cit., p. 187.
146. General references: Eliphas Levi, *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (Paris); Paracelsus; A. E. Waite, *The Occult Sciences* (London, 1891).
147. W. B. Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk-Tales* (London), p. 2.
148. W. B. Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight* (London, 1902), p. 92 n.
149. In this connexion should be read Mr. Jenner's Introduction, pp. 167 ff.
150. Cf. Crie, *Scottish Scenery* (London, 1803), pp. 347–8; P. Graham, *Sketches Descriptive of Picturesque Scenery on the Southern Confines of Perthshire* (Edinburgh, 1812), pp. 248–50,

- 253; Mahé, *Essai sur les Antiquités du Départ. du Morbihan* (Vannes, 1825); Maury, *Les Fées du Moyen-Age* (Paris, 1843).
151. David MacRitchie, *Druids and Mound Dwellers*, in *Celtic Review* (January 1910); and his *Testimony of Tradition*.
152. K. Meyer and A. Nutt, *Voyage of Bran* (London, 1895–7), ii 231–2.
153. Cf. Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 61.
154. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore*, pp. 356, 359.
155. Rhys, *Hib. Lect.*, p. 201; Jubainville, *Cyc. Myth. Irl.*, pp. 106–8.
156. E. O’Curry, *Manners and Customs* (Dublin, 1873), I. cccxx; from *Book of Ballymote*, fol. 145, b. b.
157. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 286.
158. *Ib.*, p. 275.
159. *Ib.*, pp. 226, 208–9.
160. Crawley, *Idea of the Soul*, p. 114.
161. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 289.
162. *Ib.*, p. 194.
163. Cf. Crawley, *Idea of the Soul*, chap. iv.
164. For a thorough and scientific discussion of this matter, see J. L. Nevius, *Demon Possession* (London, 1897).
165. N. G. Mitchell-Innes, *Birth, Marriage, and Death Rites of the Chinese*, in *Folk-Lore Journ.*, v. 225. Very curiously, the pagan Chinese mother uses the sign of the cross against the demon as Celtic mothers use it against fairies; and no exorcism by Catholic or Protestant to cure a fairy changeling or to drive out possessing demons is ever performed without this world-wide and pre-Christian sign of the cross (see pp. 270–1).
166. R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion* (London, 1909), p. 58, &c.; p. 67.
167. W. James, *Confidences of a ‘Psychical Researcher’*, in *American Magazine* (October 1909).
168. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*<sup>3</sup> (London, 1911), i. 220.
169. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*,<sup>3</sup> i. 221–2.
170. *Ib.*, chap. iv.
171. See Apuleius, *De Deo Socratis*; Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* (lib. i); Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis Aegypt., Chaldaeor., Assyrior.*; Plato, *Timaeus, Symposium, Politicus, Republic*, ii. iii. x; Plutarch, *De Defectu Oraculorum, The Daemon of Socrates, Isis and Osiris*; Proclus, *Commentarius in Platonis Alcibiadem*.
172. Pliny, *Natural History*, xxx. 14.



173. Cf. G. Dottin, *La Religion des Celtes* (Paris, 1904), p. 44.
174. The neo-Platonists generally, including Porphyry, Julian, Iamblichus, and Maximus, being persuaded of man's power to call up and control spirits, called white magic *theurgy*, or the invoking of good spirits, and the reverse *goëty*, or the calling up and controlling of evil spirits for criminal purposes. Cf. F. Lélut, *Du Démon de Socrate* (Paris, 1836).
- If white magic be correlated with religion as religion is popularly conceived, namely the cult of supernatural powers friendly to man, and black magic be correlated with magic as magic tends to be popularly conceived, namely witchcraft and devil-worship, we have a satisfactory historical and logical basis for making a distinction between religion and magic; religion (including white magic) is a social good, magic (black magic) is a social evil. Such a distinction as Dr. Frazer makes is untenable within the field of true magic.
175. Cf. B. Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato* (Oxford, 1892), i. 573.
176. Cf. Meyer and Nutt, *Voyage of Bran* (London, 1895–7), i. 146.
177. Campbell, *The Fians*, p. 195.
178. Cf. Stokes's trans. in *Rev. Celt.*, i. 261.
179. Cf. Stokes's trans. in *Rev. Celt.*, xv. 307.
180. From the *Conception of Mongán*, cf. Meyer, *Voyage of Bran*, i. 77.
181. Quoted and summarized from *Projectors of 'Malicious Animal Magnetism'*, in *Literary Digest*, xxxix. No. 17, pp. 676–7 (New York and London, October 23, 1909).
182. Cf. Nevius, *Demon Possession*, pp. 300–1.
183. For a fuller discussion of the history of witchcraft see *The Superstitions of Witchcraft*, by Howard Williams, London, 1865.
184. Cf. J. Quicherat, *Procès* (Paris, 1845), *passim*.
185. *Ib.*, i. 178.
186. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, pp. 127, 200, 202–3 ff.
187. Bergier, *Dict. de Théol.* (Paris, 1848), ii. 541–2, &c.
188. W. Stokes, *Tripartite Life* (London, 1887), pp. 13, 115.
189. I am personally indebted to Dr. W. J. Watson, of Edinburgh, for having directed my attention to this curious passage, and for having pointed out its probable significance in relation to druidical practices.
190. Adamnan, *Life of S. Columba*, B. II, cc. xvi, xvii.
191. For this fact I am personally indebted to Mrs. W. J. Watson, of Edinburgh.
192. Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, pp. clxxx, 303, 305; from *Book of Armagh*, fo. 9, A 2, and fo. 9, B 2.
193. Bergier, *Dict. de Théol.*, ii. 545, 431, 233.

194. See *Instruction sur le Rituel*, par l'Évêque de Toulon, iii. 1–16. 'In the Greek rite (of baptism), the priest breathes thrice on the catechumen's mouth, forehead, and breast, praying that every unclean spirit may be expelled.'—W. Bright, *Canons of First Four General Councils* (Oxford, 1892), p. 122.
195. Cf. Godescard, *Vies des Saints* (Paris, 1835), xiii. 254–66.
196. *De Incarnatione Verbi* (ed. Ben.), i. 88; cf. Godescard, op. cit., xiii. 254–66.
197. Godescard, *Vies des Saints*, xiii. 263–4.
198. Par Joly de Choin, Évêque de Toulon, i. 639.
199. Bergier, *Dict. de Théol.*, ii. 335.
200. Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, Intro., p. 162.
201. J. E. Mirville, *Des Esprits* (Paris, 1853), i. 475.
202. *Instructions sur le Rituel*, par Joly de Choin, iii. 276–7.
203. G. Evans, *Exorcism in Wales*, in *Folk-Lore*, iii. 274–7.
204. W. Crooke, in *Folk-Lore*, xiii. 189–90.
205. For ancient usages see F. Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic* (London, 1877), pp. 103–4; Iamblichus and other Neo-Platonists; and for modern usages see Marett, *Threshold of Religion*, chap. iii.
206. Cf. Marett, *Is Taboo a Negative Magic?* in *The Threshold of Religion*, pp. 85–114.
207. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 277.
208. Eastman, *Dacotah*, p. 177; cf. Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 52 n.
209. Shortland, *Trad. of New Zeal.*, p. 150; cf. Tylor, op. cit., ii. 51–2.
210. Precisely like Celtic peasants, primitive peoples often fail to take into account the fact that the physical body is in reality left behind upon entering the trance state of consciousness known to them as the world of the departed and of fairies, because there they seem still to have a body, the ghost body, which to their minds, in such a state, is undistinguishable from the physical body. Therefore they ordinarily believe that the body and soul both are taken.
211. Frazer, *Golden Bough*,<sup>2</sup> *passim*.
212. Cf. ib., i. 344 ff., 348; iii. 390.
213. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, pp. 177, 218–9.
214. Cf. Eleanor Hull, *Old Irish Tabus or Geasa*, in *Folk-Lore*, xii. 41 ff.
215. Cf. Frazer, *Golden Bough*,<sup>2</sup> i. 233 ff., 343.
216. Cf. E. J. Gwynn, *On the Idea of Fate in Irish Literature*, in *Journ. Ivernian Society* (Cork), April 1910.
217. Cf. our evidence, pp. 38, 44; also Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth* (c. i), where it is said of the 'good people' or fairies that their bodies are so 'plyable thorough the Subtilty of the Spirits that

agitate them, that they can make them appear or disappear att Pleasure. Some have Bodies or Vehicles so spungious, thin, and delectat, that they are fed by only sucking into some fine spirituous Liquors, that pierce lyke pure Air and Oyl’.

218. *Laws*, iv; cf. Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato*, v. 282–90.

219. Chief general references: *Le Cycle Mythologique Irlandais* (Paris, 1884) and *L’Épopée celtique en Irlande* (Paris, 1892)—both by H. D’Arbois de Jubainville. Chief sources: The *Book of Armagh*, a collection of ecclesiastical MSS. probably written at Armagh, and finished in A. D. 807 by the learned scribe Ferdomnach of Armagh; the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre* or ‘Book of the Dun Cow’, the most ancient of the great collections of MSS. containing the old Irish romances, compiled about A. D. 1100 in the monastery of Clonmacnoise; the *Book of Leinster*, a twelfth-century MS. compiled by Finn Mac Gorman, Bishop of Kildare; the *Yellow Book of Lecan* (fifteenth century); and the *Book of Lismore*, an old Irish MS. found in 1814 by workmen while making repairs in the castle of Lismore, and thought to be of the fifteenth century. The *Book of Lismore* contains the *Agallamh na senórach* or ‘Colloquy of the Ancients’, which has been edited by S. H. O’Grady in his *Silva Gadelica* (London, 1892), and by Whitley Stokes, *Ir. Texte*, iv. 1. For additional texts and editions of texts see Notes by R. I. Best to his translations of *Le Cycle Mythologique Irlandais* (Dublin, 1903).

220. Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 144–5.

221. Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 266–7. From the way they are described in many of the old Irish manuscripts, we may possibly regard the Tuatha De Danann as reflecting to some extent the characteristics of an early human population in Ireland. In other words, on an already flourishing belief in spiritual beings, known as the *Sidhe*, was superimposed, through anthropomorphism, an Irish folk-memory about a conquered pre-Celtic race of men who claimed descent from a mother goddess called Dana.

222. Page 10, col. 2, ll. 6–8; cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, p. 143.

223. Rhÿs, *Hib. Lect.*, p. 581 n.; and *Cóir Anmann*, in *Ir. Texte*, III, ii. 355.

224. Kuno Meyer’s trans. in *Voy. of Bran*, ii. 300.

225. Cf. Standish O’Grady, *Early Bardic Literature* (London, 1879), pp. 65–6.

226. L. U.; cf. A. Nutt, *Voy. of Bran*, i. 157–8.

227. Before Caeilte appears, Patrick is chanting Mass and pronouncing benediction ‘on the rath in which Finn Mac Cumall (the slain leader of the Fianna) has been: the rath of Drumderg’. This chanting and benediction act magically as a means of calling up the ghosts of the other Fianna, for, as the text continues, thereupon ‘the clerics saw Caeilte and his band draw near them; and fear fell on them before the tall men with their huge wolf-dogs that accompanied them, *for they were not people of one epoch or of one time with the clergy*. Then Heaven’s distinguished one, that pillar of dignity and angel on earth, Calpurn’s son Patrick, apostle of the Gael, rose and took the aspergillum to sprinkle holy water on the great men; floating over whom until that day there had been [and were now] a thousand legions of demons. Into the hills and “skalps”, into the outer borders of the region and of the country, the demons forthwith departed in all directions; after which the enormous men sat down’ (*Silva Gadelica*, ii. 103). Here, undoubtedly, we

observe a literary method of rationalizing the ghosts of the Fianna; and their sudden and mysterious coming and personal aspects can be compared with the sudden and mysterious coming and personal aspects of the Tuatha De Danann as recorded in certain Irish manuscripts.

[228.](#) Kuno Meyer's trans. in *Rev. Celt.*, x. 214–27. This tale is probably as old as the ninth or tenth century, so far as its present form is concerned, though representing very ancient traditions (Nutt, *Voy. of Bran*, i. 209).

[229.](#) Stokes's trans. in *Rev. Celt.*, xxii. 36–40. This text is one of the earliest with references to fairy beings, and may go back to the eighth or ninth century as a literary composition, though it too represents much older traditions.

[230.](#) E. O'Curry, *Lectures on Manuscript Materials* (Dublin, 1861), p. 504.

[231.](#) In the *Book of Leinster*, pp. 245–6; cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, p. 269.

[232.](#) Cf. *Mesca Ulad*, Hennessy's ed., in *Todd Lectures*, Ser. 1 (Dublin, 1889), p. 2.

[233.](#) Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 273–6.

[234.](#) Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 273–6.

[235.](#) Cf. *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 222–3.

[236.](#) *Ib.*, ii. 343–7.

[237.](#) *Ib.*, ii. 94–6.

[238.](#) *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 204–20.

[239.](#) *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 290–1. In many old texts mortals are not forcibly *taken*; but go to the fairy world through love for a fairy woman; or else to accomplish there some mission.

No doubt the most curious elements in this text are those which represent the prince and his warrior companions, fresh come from Fairyland, as in some mysterious way so changed that they must neither dismount from their horses and thus come in contact with the earth, nor allow any mortal to touch them; for to his father the king who came forward in joy to embrace him after having mourned him as dead, Laeghaire cried, 'Approach us not to touch us!' Some unknown magical bodily transmutation seems to have come about from their sojourn among the Tuatha De Danann, who are eternally young and unfading—a transmutation apparently quite the same as that which the 'gentry' are said to bring about now when one of our race is taken to live with them. And in all fairy stories no mortal ever returns from Fairyland a day older than on entering it, no matter how many years may have elapsed. The idea reminds us of the dreams of mediaeval alchemists who thought there exists, if one could only discover it, some magic potion which will so transmute every atom of the human body that death can never affect it. Probably the Christian scribe in writing down these strange words had in mind what Jesus said to Mary Magdalene when she beheld him after the Resurrection:—'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father.' The parallel would be a striking and exact one in any case, for it is recorded that Jesus after he had arisen from the dead—had come out of Hades or the invisible realm of subjectivity which, too, is Fairyland—appeared to some and not to others—some being able to recognize him and others not; and concerning the nature of Jesus's body at the Ascension not all theologians are agreed. Some believe it to have been a physical body so purified and

transmuted as to be like, or the same as, a spiritual body, and thus capable of invisibility and of entrance into the Realm of Spirit. The Scotch minister and seer used this same parallel in describing the nature and power of fairies and spirits (p. 91); hence it would seem to follow, if we admit the influence in the Irish text to be Christian, that early, like modern Christians, have, in accordance with Christianity, described the nature of the *Sidhe* so as to correspond with what we know it to be in the Fairy-Faith itself, both anciently and at the present day.

[240.](#) *Death of Muirchertach*, Stokes's trans., in *Rev. Celt.*, xxiii. 397.

[241.](#) Cf. J. Loth, *Les Mabinogion* (Paris, 1889), i. 38–52.

[242.](#) *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 187–92.

[243.](#) *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 142–4.

[244.](#) Campbell, *The Fiants*, pp. 79–80. In *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 522, it is stated that the mother of Ossian bore him whilst in the shape of a doe. The mother of Ossian in animal shape may be an example of an ancient Celtic totemistic survival.

[245.](#) *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 311–24.

[246.](#) *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 311–24.

[247.](#) For an enumeration of the Tuatha De Danann chieftains and their respective territories see *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 225.

[248.](#) Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, p. 285.

[249.](#) I am personally indebted for these names to Dr. Douglas Hyde.

[250.](#) Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 284–9; cf. *Rev. Celt.*, iii. 347.

[251.](#) Cf. E. S. Hartland, *Science of Fairy Tales* (London, 1891), cc. x–xi.

[252.](#) Stokes's trans. in *Rev. Celt.*, xvi. 274–5.

[253.](#) *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 222 ff.; ii. 290. In another version of the second tale, referred to above (on page 295), Laeghaire and his fifty companions enter the fairy world through a *dún*.

[254.](#) Sometimes, as in *Da Choca's Hostel* (*Rev. Celt.*, xxi. 157, 315), the *Badb* appears as a weird woman uttering prophecies. In this case the *Badb* watches over Cormac as his doom comes. She is described as standing on one foot, and with one eye closed (apparently in a bird's posture), as she chanted to Cormac this prophecy:—‘I wash the harness of a king who will perish.’

[255.](#) Synonymous names are *Badb-catha*, *Fea*, *Ana*. Cf. *Rev. Celt.*, i. 35–7.

[256.](#) Cf. Hennessy, *Ancient Irish Goddess of War*, in *Rev. Celt.*, i. 32–55.

[257.](#) Stokes, *Second Battle of Moytura*, in *Rev. Celt.*, xii. 109–11.

[258.](#) Luzel, *Contes populaires de Basse Bretagne*, iii. 296–311.

[259.](#) The Celtic examples recall non-Celtic ones: the raven was sacred among the ancient Scandinavians and Germans, being looked upon as the emblem of Odin; in ancient Egypt and Rome commonly, and to a less extent in ancient Greece, gods often declared their will through birds or even took the form of birds; in Christian scriptures the Spirit of God or the Holy Ghost

descended upon Jesus at his baptism in the semblance of a dove; and it is almost a world-wide custom to symbolize the human soul under the form of a bird or butterfly. Possibly such beliefs as these are relics of a totemistic creed which in times long previous to history was as definitely held by the ancestors of the nations of antiquity, including the ancient Celts, as any totemistic creed to be found now among native Australians or North American Red Men. At all events, in the story of a bird ancestry of Conaire we seem to have a perfectly clear example of a Celtic totemistic survival—even though Dr. Frazer may not admit it as such (cf. *Rev. Celt.*, xxii. 20, 24; xii. 242–3).

[260.](#) Hennessy, *The Ancient Irish Goddess of War*, in *Rev. Celt.*, i. 32–57.

[261.](#) *Aoibheall*, who came to tell Brian Borumha of his death at Clontarf, was the family banshee of the royal house of Munster. Cf. J. H. Todd, *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill* (London, 1867), p. 201.

[262.](#) Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 440.

[263.](#) Cf. Hennessy, in *Rev. Celt.*, i. 39–40. In place of *badb*, Dr. Hyde (*Lit. Hist. Irl.*, p. 440) uses the word *vulture*.

[264.](#) Hennessy, in *Rev. Celt.*, i. 52.

265. Chief general reference: Sir John Rhys, *Arthurian Legend* (Oxford, 1891). Chief sources: Nennius, *Historia Britonum* (circa 800); Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* (circa 1136); Wace, *Le Roman de Brut* (circa 1155); Layamon's *Brut* (circa 1200); Marie de France, *Lais* (twelfth-thirteenth century); *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* (twelfth-fifteenth century), edited by W. F. Skene; *The Mabinogion* (based on the *Red Book of Hergest*, a fourteenth-century manuscript), edited by Lady Charlotte Guest, Sir John Rhys and J. G. Evans, and Professor J. Loth; Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur* (1470); *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, collected out of ancient manuscripts (Denbigh, 1870); *Iolo Manuscripts*, a selection of ancient Welsh manuscripts (Llandovery, 1848).

266. In a Welsh poem of the twelfth century (see W. F. Skene, *Four Ancient Books*, Edinburgh, 1868, ii. 37, 38) wherein the war feats of Prince Geraint are described, his men, who lived and fought a long time after the period assigned to Arthur, are called the men of Arthur; and, as Sir John Rhys thinks, this is good evidence that the genuine Arthur was a mythical figure, one might almost be permitted to say a god, who overshadows and directs his warrior votaries, but who, never descending into the battle, is in this respect comparable with the Irish war-goddess the *Badb* (cf. Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, London, 1904, p. 236).

267. Cf. Rhys, *Arth. Leg.*, chap. 1.

268. Cf. Rhys, *Arth. Leg.*, pp. 24, 48. Sir John Rhys sees good reasons for regarding Arthur as a culture hero, because of Arthur's traditional relation with agriculture, which most culture heroes, like Osiris, have taught their people (ib., pp. 41–3).

269. Cf. G. Maspero, *Contes populaires de l'Égypte Ancienne*<sup>3</sup> (Paris, 1906), Intro., p. 57.

270. Sommer's Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, iii. 1.

271. Rhys, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 9.

272. I am indebted to Professor J. Loth for help with this etymology.
273. Cf. Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 22.
274. i. 10; ii. 21<sup>b</sup>; iii. 70; cf. Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 60.
275. See Williams' *Seint Greal*, pp. 278, 304, 341, 617, 634, 658, 671; Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 61.
276. Cf. Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, pp. 51, 35; and see our study, pp. 374–6.
277. *Chevalier de la Charrette* (ed. by Tarbé), p. 22; *Romania*, xii. 467, 515; cf. Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 54.
278. *Romania*, xii. 467–8, 473–4; cf. Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 55.
279. Cf. Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 93–4.
280. *Romania*, xii. 508; cf. Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 54.
281. Book XIX, c. i.
282. In the *Lebar Brecc* there is a tract describing eight Eucharistic Colours and their mystical or hidden meaning; and green is so described that we recognize in its Celtic-Christian symbolism the same essential significance as in the writings of both pagan and non-Celtic Christian mystics, thus:—‘This is what the Green denotes, when he (the priest) looks at it: that his heart and his mind be filled with great faintness and exceeding sorrow: for what is understood by it is his burial at the end of life under mould of earth; for green is the original colour of every earth, and therefore the colour of the robe of Offering is likened unto green’ (Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, Intro., p. 189). During the ceremonies of initiation into the Ancient Mysteries, it is supposed that the neophyte left the physical body in a trance state, and in full consciousness, which he retained afterwards, entered the subjective world and beheld all its wonders and inhabitants; and that coming out of that world he was clothed in a robe of sacred green to symbolize his own spiritual resurrection and re-birth into real life—for he had penetrated the Mystery of Death and was now an initiate. Even yet there seems to be an echo of the ancient Egyptian Mysteries in the Festival of Al-Khidr celebrated in the middle of the wheat harvest in Lower Egypt. Al-Khidr is a holy personage who, according to the belief of the people, was the Vizier of Dhu'l-Karnen, a contemporary of Abraham, and who, never having died, is still living and will continue to live until the Day of Judgement. And he is always represented ‘clad in green garments, whence probably the name’ he bears. Green is thus associated with a hero or god who is immortal and unchanging, like the Tuatha De Danann and fairy races (see Sir Norman Lockyer's *Stonehenge and Other Stone Monuments*, London, 1909, p. 29). In modern Masonry, which preserves many of the ancient mystic rites, and to some extent those of initiation as anciently performed, green is the symbol of life, immutable nature, of truth, and victory. In the evergreen the Master Mason finds the emblem of hope and immortality. And the masonic authority who gives this information suggests that in all the Ancient Mysteries this symbolism was carried out—green symbolizing the birth of the world and the moral creation or resurrection of the initiate (*General History, Cyclopedia, and Dictionary of Freemasonry*, by Robert Macoy, 33<sup>o</sup>, New York, 1869).
283. *Myv. Arch.*, i. 175. The text itself in this work is said to be copied from the *Green Book*—now unknown. Cf. Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.* p. 56 n.

284. In this text, the Gwenhwyvar who is in the power of Melwas is referred to as Arthur's second wife Gwenhwyvar, for according to the Welsh Triads (i. 59; ii. 16; iii. 109) there are three wives of Arthur all named Gwenhwyvar. As Sir John Rhys observes, no poet has ever availed himself of all three, for the evident reason that they would have spoilt his plot (*Arth. Leg.*, p. 35).
285. D. ab Gwilym's Poetry (London, 1789), poem cxi, line 44. Cf. Rhys, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 66.
286. Malory, Book I, c. xxv. One account of Arthur's sword *Caledvwlch* or *Caleburn* describes it as having been made in the Isle of Avalon (Lady Ch. Guest's *Mabinogion*, ii. 322 n.; also *Myv. Arch.*, ii. 306).
287. Malory, Book IX, c. xv; Sir John Rhys takes the Lady of the Lake who sends Arthur the sword and the one who aids him afterwards (though, apparently by error, two characters in Malory) as different aspects of the one lake-lady *Morgen* (*Arth. Leg.*, p. 348).
288. Merlin explained to Arthur that King Loth's wife was Arthur's own sister (Sommer's *Malory*, i. 64–5); and King Loth is one of the rulers of the Otherworld.
289. Book XXI, c. vi.
290. This poem, according to Gaston Paris, was translated during the late twelfth century from a French original now lost (*Romania*, x. 471). Cf. Rhys, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 127.
291. Malory, Book XII, cc. iii–x; Rhys, *Arth. Leg.*, pp. 145, 164. Galahad, however, does not belong to the more ancient Arthurian romances at all, so far as scholars can determine; and, therefore, too much emphasis ought not to be placed on this episode in connexion with the character of Arthur.
292. We should like to direct the reader's attention to the interesting similarity shown between this old story of *Kulhwch and Olwen* and the fairy legend which we found living in South Wales, and now recorded by us on page 161, under the title of *Einion and Olwen*. As we have there suggested, the legend seems to be the remnant of a very ancient bardic tale preserved in the oral traditions of the people; and the prevalence of such bardic traditions in a part of Wales where some of the *Mabinogion* stories either took shape, or from where they drew folk-lore material, would make it probable that there may even be some close relationship between the Olwen of the story and the Olwen of our folk-tale. If it could be shown that there is, we should be able at once to regard both Olwens as 'Fair-Folk' or of the *Tylwyth Teg*, and the quest of Kulhwch as really a journey to the Otherworld to gain a fairy wife.
293. We may even have in the story of *Kulhwch and Olwen* a symbolical or mystical account of ancient Brythonic rites of initiation, which have also directly to do with the spiritual world and its invisible inhabitants.
294. Cf. J. Loth, *Les Mabinogion* (Paris, 1889), p. 252 n.
295. Cf. J. Loth, *Le Mabinogi de Kulhwch et Olwen* (Saint-Brieuc, 1888), Intro., p. 7.
296. Lady Ch. Guest's *Mabinogion* (London, 1849), ii. 323 n.
297. Cf. R. H. Fletcher, *Arthurian Material in the Chronicles*, in *Harv. Stud. and Notes in Phil. and Lit.*, x. 20–1.



298. Fletcher, *ib.*, x. 29; 26.
299. Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 7; and Rhÿs, *The Welsh People*<sup>3</sup> (London, 1902), p. 105.
300. Cf. Fletcher, *op. cit.*, x. 43–115; from ed. by San-Marte (A. Schulz), *Gottfried's von Monmouth Hist. Reg. Brit.* (Halle, 1854), Eng. trans. by A. Thompson, *The British History*, &c. (1718).
301. Cf. Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–44.
302. Sir Frederic Madden, *Layamon's Brut* (London, 1847), ii. 384. Here the Germanic elves are by Layamon made the same in character and nature as Brythonic elves or fairies.
303. Madden, *Layamon's Brut*, ii. 144.
304. J. Bédier's ed., *Société des anciens textes français* (Paris, 1902).
305. E. Muret's ed., *Société des anciens textes français* (Paris, 1903).
306. A. C. L. Brown, *The Knight and the Lion*; also, by same author, *Iwain*, in *Harv. Stud. and Notes in Phil. and Lit.*, vii. 146, &c.
307. *Celtic Mag.*, xii. 555; *Romania* (1888); cf. Brown, *ib.*
308. J. Loth, *Les Romans arthuriens*, in *Rev. Celt.*, xiii. 497.
309. *Bibliotheca Normannica*, iii, *Die Lais der Marie de France*, pp. 86–112.
310. Cf. W. H. Schofield, *The Lays of Graelent and Lanval, and the Story of Wayland*, in *Pub. Mod. Lang. Ass. of America*, xv. 176.
311. Cf. Schofield, *The Lay of Guingamor*, in *Harv. Stud. and Notes in Phil. and Lit.*, v. 221–2.
312. For editions, and fuller details of the fairy elements, see De La Warr B. Easter, *A Study of the Magic Elements in the Romans d'Aventure and the Romans Bretons* (Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, 1906). See also Lucy A. Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of the Arthurian Romance*, Radcliffe College Monograph XIII (New York, 1903).
313. Perc., vi. 235; cf. Easter's Dissertation, p. 42 n.
314. *Joufrois*, 3179 ff.; ed. Hofmann und Muncker (Halle, 1880); cf. Easter's Diss., pp. 40–2 n.
315. *Brun*, 562 ff., 3237, 3251, 3396, 3599 ff.; ed. Paul Meyer (Paris, 1875); cf. *ib.*, pp. 42 n., 44 n.
316. E. Anwyl, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, in *Zeit. für Celt. Phil.* (London, Paris, 1897), i. 278.
317. Cf. Nutt, *Voy. of Bran*, ii. 19, 21.
318. *Black Book of Caermarthen*, xvii, stanza 7, ll. 5–8. This book dates from 1154 to 1189 as a manuscript; cf. Skene, *Four Anc. Books*, i. 3, 372.
319. Stanzas 19–20. This book took shape as a manuscript from the fourteenth to fifteenth century, according to Skene. Cf. Skene, *Four Anc. Books*, i. 3, 464.
320. See *A Fugitive Poem of Myrddin in his Grave. Red Book of Hergest*, ii. Skene, *ib.*, i. 478–81, stanza 27.

321. Chief general references: H. D'Arbois de Jubainville, *L'Épopée celtique en Irlande, Le Cycle Mythologique Irlandais*; Kuno Meyer and Alfred Nutt, *The Happy Otherworld and the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth*. Chief sources: the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre* (A. D. 1100); the *Book of Leinster* (twelfth century); the *Lais of Marie de France* (twelfth to thirteenth century); the *White Book of Rhyderch*, Hengwrt Coll. (thirteenth to fourteenth century); the *Yellow Book of Lecan* (fifteenth century); the *Book of Lismore* (fifteenth century); the *Book of Fermoy* (fifteenth century); the *Four Ancient Books of Wales* (twelfth to fifteenth century).
322. One of the commonest legends among all Celtic peoples is about some lost city like the Breton Is, or some lost land or island (cf. Rhys, *Arth. Leg.*, c. xv, and *Celtic Folk-Lore*, c. vii); and we can be quite sure that if, as some scientists now begin to think (cf. Batella, *Pruebas geológicas de la existencia de la Atlántida*, in *Congreso internacional de Americanistas*, iv., Madrid, 1882; also Meyers, *Grosses Konversations-Lexikon*, ii. 44, Leipzig und Wien, 1903) Atlantis once existed, its disappearance must have left from a prehistoric epoch a deep impress on folk-memory. But the Otherworld idea being in essence animistic is not to be regarded, save from a superficial point of view, as conceivably having had its origin in a lost Atlantis. The real evolutionary process, granting the disappearance of this island continent, would seem rather to have been one of localizing and anthropomorphosing very primitive Aryan and pre-Aryan beliefs about a heaven-world, such as have been current among almost all races of mankind in all stages of culture, throughout the two Americas and Polynesia as well as throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. (Cf. Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 62, 48, &c.)
323. *White Book of Rhyderch*, folio 291<sup>a</sup>; cf. Rhys, *Arth. Leg.*, pp. 268–9.
324. From *Echtra Condla*, in the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*. Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 192–3.
325. Cf. Eleanor Hull, *The Silver Bough in Irish Legend*, in *Folk-Lore*, xii.
326. Cf. Eleanor Hull, op. cit., p. 431.
327. Classical parallels to the Celtic Otherworld journeys exist in the descent of Dionysus to bring back Semele, of Orpheus to recover his beloved Eurydike, of Herakles at the command of his master Eurystheus to fetch up the three-headed Kerberos—as mentioned first in Homer's *Iliad* (cf. Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 48); and chiefly in the voyage of Odysseus across the deep-flowing Ocean to the land of the departed (Homer, *Odyss.* xi).
328. Servius, *ad Aen.*, vi. 136 ff.
329. *Voy. of Bran*, i, pp. 2 ff. The tale is based on seven manuscripts ranging in age from the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre* of about A. D. 1100 to six others belonging to the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries (cf. ib., p. xvi).
330. This tale exists in several manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; i.e. *Book of Ballymote*, and *Yellow Book of Lecan*, as edited and translated by Stokes, in *Irische Texte*, III. i. 183–229; cf. *Voy. of Bran*, i. 190 ff.; cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 326–33.
331. The fountain is a sacred fountain containing the sacred salmon; and the nine hazels are the sacred hazels of inspiration and poetry. These passages are among the most mystical in Irish literature. Cf. pp. 432–3.

332. Cf. Stokes's trans. in *Irische Texte* (Leipzig, 1891), III. i. 211–16.
333. The Greeks saw in Hermes the symbol of the Logos. Like Manannan, he conducted the souls of men to the Otherworld of the gods, and then brought them back to the human world. Hermes 'holds a rod in his hands, beautiful, golden, wherewith he spellbinds the eyes of men whomsoever he would, and wakes them again from sleep'—in initiations; while Manannan and the fairy beings lure mortals to the fairy world through sleep produced by the music of the Silver Branch.—Hippolytus on the Naasenes (from the Hebrew *Nachash*, meaning a 'Serpent'), a Gnostic school; cf. G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, pp. 198, 201. Or again, 'the Caduceus, or Rod of Mercury (Hermes), and the Thyrsus in the Greek Mysteries, which conducted the soul from life to death, and from death to life, figured forth the serpentine power in man, and the path whereby it would carry the "man" aloft to the height, if he would but cause the "Waters of the Jordan" to "flow upwards"'.—G. R. S. Mead. *ib.*, p. 185.
334. Cf. Hennessy's ed. in *Todd Lectures*, ser. I. i. 9.
335. Among the early ecclesiastical manuscripts of the so-called *Prophecies*. See E. O'Curry, *Lectures*, p. 383.
336. Cf. Eleanor Hull, *op. cit.*, pp. 439–40.
337. Now in three versions based on the *L. U.* MS. Our version is collated from O'Curry's translation in *Atlantis*, i. 362–92, ii. 98–124, as revised by Kuno Meyer, *Voy. of Bran*, i. 152 ff.; and from Jubainville's translation in *L'Ép. celt. en Irl.*, pp. 170–216.
338. As Alfred Nutt pointed out, 'There is no parallel to the position or to the sentiments of Fand in the post-classic literature of Western Europe until we come to Guinevere and Isolt, Ninian and Orgueilleuse' (*Voy. of Bran*, i. 156 n.).
339. See poem *Tir na nog* (Land of Youth), by Michael Comyn, composed or collected about the year 1749. Ed. by Bryan O'Looney, in *Trans. Ossianic Soc.*, iv. 234–70.
340. Laeghaire, who also came back from Fairyland on a fairy horse, and fifty warriors with him each likewise mounted, to say good-bye for ever to the king and people of Connaught, were warned as they set out for this world not to dismount if they wished to return to their fairy wives. The warning was strictly observed, and thus they were able to go back to the *Sidhe*-world (see p. 295).
341. Cf. *Bibliotheca Normannica*, iii, *Die Lais der Marie de France*, pp. 86–112.
342. Cf. Stokes's trans., in *Rev. Celt.*, ix. 453–95, x. 50–95. Most of the tale comes from the *L. U.* MS.; cf. *L'Ép. celt. en Irl.*, pp. 449–500.
343. *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 385–401. The MS. text, *Echira Thaidg mheic Chéin*, or 'The Adventure of Cian's son Teigue', is found in the *Book of Lismore*.
344. Summarized and quoted from translation by R. I. Best, in *Ériu*, iii. 150–73. The text is found in the *Book of Fermoy* (pp. 139–45), a fifteenth-century codex in the Royal Irish Academy.
345. Folios 113–15, trans. O'Beirne Crow, *Journ. Kilkenny Archae. Soc.* (1870–1), pp. 371–448; cf. Rhys, *Hib. Lect.*, pp. 260–1.

346. Cf. Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, i. 264–6, 276, &c.
347. Cf. *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 301 ff., from Additional MS. 34119, dating from 1765, in British Museum.
348. *Giolla an Fhiughla*, or ‘The Lad of the Ferrule’, trans. by Douglas Hyde, in *Irish Texts Society*, London, 1899.
349. Cf. Meyer and Nutt, *Voy. of Bran*, i. 147, 228, 230, 235; 161.
350. The bulk of the text comes from the *Book of Fermoy*. Cf. Stokes’s trans. in *Rev. Celt.*, xiv. 59, 49, 53, &c.
351. J. Loth, *L’Émigration bretonne en Armorique* (Paris, 1883), pp. 139–40.
352. Ed. and trans. by W. Stokes, Calcutta, 1866. This *Vision* has been erroneously ascribed to the celebrated Abbot of Iona, who died in 703; but Professor Zimmer has regarded it as a ninth-century composition; cf. *Voy. of Bran*, i. 219 ff.
353. Cf. *Voy. of Bran*, i. 195 ff.
354. See J. G. Campbell, *The Fians*, pp. 260–7.
355. *The Literary Movement in Ireland*, in *Ideals in Ireland*, ed. by Lady Gregory (London, 1901), p. 95.
356. Cf. *Voy. of Bran*, i. 331.
357. General reference: *Essay upon the Irish Vision of the happy Otherworld and the Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth*, by Alfred Nutt in Kuno Meyer’s *Voyage of Bran*. Chief sources: *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*; *Book of Leinster*; *Four Ancient Books of Wales*; *Mabinogion*; *Silva Gadelica*; *Barddas*, a collection of Welsh manuscripts made about 1560; and the *Annals of the Four Masters*, compiled in the first half of the seventeenth century.
358. Cf. Plato, *Republic*, x; *Phaedo*; *Phaedrus*, &c.; Iamblichus, *Concerning the Mysteries of Egypt, Chaldaea, Assyria*; Plutarch, *Mysteries of Isis (De Iside et Osiride)*.
359. He says:—‘I, for my part, suspect that the spirit was implanted in them (rational creatures, men) from without’ (*De Principiis*, Book I, c. vii. 4);... ‘the cause of each one’s actions is a pre-existing one; and then every one, according to his deserts, is made by God either a vessel unto honour or dishonour’ (ib., Book III, c. i. 20). ‘Whence we are of opinion that, seeing the soul, as we have frequently said, is immortal and eternal, it is possible that, in the many and endless periods of duration in the immeasurable and different worlds, it may descend from the highest good to the lowest evil, or be restored from the lowest evil to the highest good’ (ib., Book III, c. i, 21);... ‘every one has the reason in himself, why he has been placed in this or that rank in life’ (ib., Book III, c. v, 4).
360. Cf. Bergier, *Origène*, in *Dict. de Théologie*, v. 69.
361. *Holy Bible*, Revised Version, St. Matt. xi. 14–15; cf. St. Matt. xvii. 10–13, St. Mark ix. 13, St. Luke vii. 27, St. John i. 21.
362. Tertullian’s conclusion is as follows:—‘These substances (“soul and body”) are, in fact, the natural property of each individual; whilst “the spirit and power” (cf. Mal. iv. 5) are bestowed as

external gifts by the grace of God, and so may be transferred to another person according to the purpose and will of the Almighty, as was anciently the case with respect to the spirit of Moses' (cf. Num. xii. 2).—*De Anima* c. xxxv; cf. trans. in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* (Edinburgh, 1870), xv. 496–7.

363. Origen says:—‘But that there should be certain doctrines not made known to the multitude, which are [revealed] after the exoteric ones have been taught, is not a peculiarity of Christianity alone, but also of philosophic systems, in which certain truths are exoteric and others esoteric’ (*Origen against Celsus*, Book I, c. vii).

364. How Tertullian almost literally accepted the re-birth doctrine is shown in his *Apology*, chapter xlviii, concerning the resurrection of the body. It is the corrupted form of the doctrine, viz. transmigration of human souls into animal bodies, which he therein, as well as in his *De Anima* and elsewhere, chiefly and logically combats, as Origen also combated it. He first shows why a human soul must return into a human body in accordance with natural analogy, every creature being after its own kind always; and then, because the purpose of the Resurrection is the judgement, that the soul must return into its own body. And he concludes:—‘It is surely more worthy of belief that a man will be restored from a man, any given person from any given person, but still a man; so that the same kind of soul may be reinstated in the same mode of existence, even if not into the same outward form’ (*The Apology of Tertullian for the Christians*; cf. trans. by T. H. Bindley, Oxford, 1890, pp. 137–9).

365. British Museum MS. Add. 5114, vellum—a Coptic manuscript in the dialect of Upper Egypt. Its undetermined date is placed by Woide at latest about the end of the fourth century. It was evidently copied by one scribe from an older manuscript, the original probably having been the *Apocalypse of Sophia*, by Valentius, the learned Gnostic who lived in Egypt for thirty years during the second century. See the translation of the Schwartz’s parallel Latin version of *Pistis Sophia* and its introduction, both by G. R. S. Mead (London, 1896).

366. The chief passages are as follows, Jesus being the speaker:—‘Moreover, in the region of the soul of the rulers, destined to receive it, I found the soul of the prophet Elias, in the aeons of the sphere, and I took him, and receiving his soul also, I brought it to the virgin of light, and she gave it to her receivers; they brought it to the sphere of the rulers, and cast it into the womb of Elizabeth. Wherefore the power of the little Iaô, who is in the midst, and the soul of Elias the prophet, are united with the body of John the Baptist. For this cause have ye been in doubt aforetime, when I said unto you, “John said, I am not the Christ”; and ye said unto me, “It is written in the Scripture, that when the Christ shall come, Elias will come before him, and prepare his way.” And I, when ye had said this unto me, replied unto you, “Elias verily is come, and hath prepared all things, according as it is written; and they have done unto him whatsoever they would.” And when I perceived that ye did not understand that I had spoken concerning the soul of Elias united with John the Baptist, I answered you openly and face to face with the words, “If ye will receive it, John the Baptist is Elias who, I said, was for to come”’ (*Pistis Sophia*, Book I, 12–13, Mead’s translation).

367. ‘The Saviour answered and said unto his disciples:—“Preach ye unto the whole world, saying unto men, ‘Strive together that ye may receive the mysteries of light in this time of stress, and enter into the kingdom of light. Put not off from day to day, and from cycle to cycle, in the belief

that ye will succeed in obtaining the mysteries when ye return to the world in another cycle”””  
(*Pistis Sophia*, Book II, 317, Mead’s translation).

368. Cf. Bergier, *Manichéisme*, in *Dict. de Théol.*, iv. 211–13.

369. The *Refutation of Irenaeus*, until quite recently, has been the chief source of much of our knowledge concerning Gnosticism. It was written during the second century at Lyons, by Irenaeus, a bishop of Gaul, far from any direct contact with the still flourishing Gnosticism. But now with the discovery of genuine manuscripts of Gnostic works: (1) the *Askew Codex*, vellum, British Museum, London, containing the *Pistis Sophia* (see above, p. 361 n.) and extracts from the *Books of the Saviour*; (2) the *Bruce Codex* (two MSS.), papyrus, Bodleian Library, Oxford, containing the fragmentary *Book of the Great Logos*, an unknown treatise, and fragments; and (3) the *Akhmīm Codex* (discovered in 1896), papyrus, Egyptian Museum, Berlin, containing *The Gospel of Mary* (or *Apocryphon of John*), *The Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, and *The Acts of Peter*, we are able to check from original sources the Fathers in many of their writings and canons concerning Gnostic ‘heresies’; and find that Irenaeus, the last refuge of Christian haeresiologists, has so condensed and paraphrased his sources that we cannot depend upon him at all for a consistent exposition of Gnostic doctrines, which with more or less prejudice he is trying to refute. It is true that the age of these manuscripts has not been satisfactorily determined; in fact most of them have not yet been carefully studied. Very probably, however, as appears to be the case with the *Pistis Sophia*, they have been copied from manuscripts which were contemporary with or earlier than the time of Irenaeus, and hence may be regarded as good authority in determining Gnostic teachings. (Cf. all of above note with G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, London, 1900, pp. 147, 151–3.)

Many unprejudiced scholars are now unwilling to admit the rulings of the Church Councils which determined what was orthodox and what heretical doctrines among the Gnostic-Christians, because many of their dogmatic decisions were based upon the unscholarly *Refutation of Irenaeus* and upon other equally unreliable evidence. The data which have accumulated in the hands of scholars about early Christian thought and Gnosticism are now much more complete and trustworthy than the similar data were upon which the Council of Constantinople in 553 based its decision with respect to the doctrine of re-birth; and the truth coming to be recognized seems to be that the Gnostics rather than the Church Fathers, who adopted from them what doctrines they liked, condemning those they did not like, should henceforth be regarded as the first Christian theologians, and mystics. If this view of the very difficult and complex matter be accepted, then modern Christianity itself ought to be allowed to resume what thus appears to have been its original position—so long obscured by the well-meaning, but, nevertheless, ill-advised ecclesiastical councils—as the synthesizer of pagan religions and philosophies. Some such view has been accepted by many eminent Christian theologians since Origen: i.e. the Cambridge Platonist, Henry More, openly advocated the re-birth doctrine in the seventeenth century; and in later times it has been preached from Christian pulpits by such men as Henry Ward Beecher and Phillips Brooks.

370. See A. Bertrand, *La Religion des Gaulois, les Druides et le Druidisme* (Paris, 1897); H. Jennings, *The Rosicrucians* (London, 1887); the Work of Paracelsus; H. Cornelius Agrippa, *De*

*Occulta Philosophia* (Paris, 1567); H. P. Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*, and the *Secret Doctrine* (London, 1888); and *Hermetic Works*, by Anna Kingsford and E. Maitland (London, 1885).

371. Cf. Bergier, *Purgatoire*, in *Dict. de Théol.*, v. 409. A Celt, a professed faithful and fervent adherent of the Church of Rome, whom I met in the Morbihan where he now lives, told me that he believes thoroughly in the doctrine of re-birth, and that it is according to his opinion the proper and logical interpretation of the doctrine of Purgatory; and he added that there are priests in his Church who have told him that their personal interpretation of the purgatorial doctrine is the same. Thus some Roman Catholics do not deny the re-birth doctrine. And such conversations as this with Catholic Celts in Ireland and Brittany lead me to believe that to a larger extent than has been suspected the old Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth may have been one of the chief foundations for the modern Roman Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory, whose origin is not clearly indicated in any theological works. For us this probability is important as well as interesting, and especially so when we remember the profound influence which the Celtic St. Patrick's Purgatory certainly exerted on the Church during the Middle Ages when the doctrine of Purgatory was taking definite shape (see our chapter x).

372. *Barddas* (Llandovery, 1862) is 'a collection (by Iolo Morganwg, a Bard) of original documents, illustrative of the theology, wisdom, and usage of the Bardo-Druidic System of the Isle of Britain'. The original manuscripts are said to have been in the possession of Llywelyn Sion, a Bard of Glamorgan, about 1560. *Barddas* shows considerable Christian influence, yet in its essential teachings is sufficiently distinct. Though of late composition, *Barddas* seems to represent the traditional bardic doctrines as they had been handed down orally for an unknown period of time, it having been forbidden in earlier times to commit such doctrines to writing. We are well aware also of the adverse criticisms passed upon these documents; but since no one questions their Celtic origin—whether it be ancient or more modern—we are content to use them.

373. *Barddas*, i, 189–91.

374. *Barddas*, i, 177.

375. Preface to *Barddas*, xlii.

376. One of the greatest errors formerly made by European Sanskrit scholars and published broadcast throughout the West, so that now it is popularly accepted there as true, is that Nirvana, the goal of Indian philosophy and religion, means annihilation. It does mean annihilation (evolutionary transmutation of lower into higher), but only of all those forces or elements which constitute man as an animal. The error arose from interpreting exoterically instead of esoterically, and was a natural result of that system of western scholarship which sees and often cares only to examine external aspects. Native Indian scholars who have advised us in this difficult problem prefer to translate *Nirvana* as 'Self-realization', i.e. a state of supernormal consciousness (to be acquired through the evolution of the individual), as much superior to the normal human consciousness as the normal human consciousness is superior to the consciousness existing in the brute kingdom.

377. *De Bel. Gal.*, lib. vi. 14. 5; vi. 18. 1.

378. Book V, 31. 4.

379. *De Situ Orbis*, iii. c. 2: 'One point alone of the Druids' teaching has become generally known among the common people (in order that they should be braver in war), that souls are eternal and there is a second life among the shades.'
380. i. 449–62.
381. Lucan, i. 457–8; i. 458–62.
382. Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 345, 347 ff.
383. *Folk-Lore*, xii. 64, &c.; also cf. Eleanor Hull, *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature* (London, 1898), Intro., p. 23, &c.
384. What is probably the oldest form of a tale concerning Conchobhar's birth makes Conchobhar 'the son of a god who incarnated himself in the same way as did Lug and Etain' (cf. *Voy. of Bran*, ii. 73).
385. See *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*, 101<sup>b</sup>; and *Book of Leinster*, 123<sup>b</sup>:—'Cúchulainn mc dea dechtiri.'
386. We have already mentioned the belief that gods having their abode in the sun could leave it to assume bodies here on earth and become culture heroes and great teachers (see p. 309).
387. From *Wooing of Emer* in *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*; cf. *Voy. of Bran*, ii. 97.
388. *L'Épopée celt. en Irl.*, p. 11.
389. Cf. *Voy. of Bran*, ii. p. 74 ff.
390. In the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*, 133<sup>a</sup>–134<sup>b</sup>; cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 336–43; cf. *Voy. of Bran*, i. 49–52; cf. O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, iii. 175.
391. Cf. Stokes's ed. *Annals of Tigernach, Third Frag.* in *Rev. Celt.* xvii. 178. In the piece called *Tuait baile Mongáin* in the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*, p. 134, col. 2, 'Mongan is seen living with his wife the year of the death of Ciaran mac int Shair, and of Tuathal Mael-Garb, that is to say in 544,' following the *Chronicum Scotorum*, Hennessy's ed., pp. 48–9. As D'Arbois de Jubainville adds, the Irish chronicles of this epoch are only approximate in their dates. Thus, while the *Four Masters* (i. 243) makes the death of Mongan AD 620, the *Annals of Ulster* makes it A. D. 625, the *Chronicum Scotorum* AD 625, the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, A. D. 624, and *Egerton MS.* 1782 A. D. 615 (cf. *Voy. of Bran*, i. 137–9).
392. J. O'Donovan, *Annals of Ireland by the Four Masters* (Dublin, 1856), i. 121.
393. Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 336–43; O'Curry, *Manners and Customs* iii. 175; *L. U.*, 133<sup>a</sup>–134<sup>b</sup>; and *Voy. of Bran*, i. 52.
394. *Voy. of Bran*, i. 44–5; from *The Conception of Mongan*.
395. Meyer's version, *Voy. of Bran*, i. 73–4.
396. Cf. *Voy. of Bran*, i. 137.
397. *Voy. of Bran*, i. 22–8, quatrains 48–59, &c.
398. In *L. U.*; cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, pp. 311–22; and *Voy. of Bran*, ii. 47–53.



399. In the Irish conception of re-birth there is no change of sex: Lug is re-born as a boy, in Cuchulainn; Finn as Mongan; Etain as a girl. But it seems that Etain as a mortal had no consciousness of her previous divine existence, while Cuchulainn and Mongan knew their non-human origin and pre-existence.
400. Some time after this, according to one part of the tale, Eochaid stormed Midir's fairy palace—for the purpose localized in Ireland—and won Etain back, but the fairies cast a curse on his race for this, and Conaire, his grandson, fell a victim to it. Such a recovering of Etain by Eochaid may vaguely suggest a re-birth of Etain, through the power exerted by Eochaid, who, being a king, is to be regarded in his non-human nature as one of the Tuatha De Danann himself, like Midir his rival.
401. Cf. *The Gilla decair*, in *Silva Gadelica*, pp. 300–3.
402. Cf. *Voy. of Bran*, ii. 76 ff. The Christian scribe's version fills up the space between Tuan's death and re-birth by making him pass eighty years as a stag, twenty as a wild boar, one hundred as an eagle, and twenty as a salmon (ib., p. 79). In this particular example, the uninitiated scribe (evidently having failed to grasp an important aspect of the re-birth doctrine as this was esoterically explained in the Mysteries, namely, that between death and re-birth, while the conscious Ego is resident in the Otherworld, the physical atoms of the discarded human body may transmigrate through various plant and animal bodies) appears to set forth as Celtic an erroneous doctrine of the transmigration of the conscious Ego itself (see p. 513 n.). In other texts, for example in the song which Amaigen (considered the Gaelic equivalent or even original of the Brythonic Taliessin) sang as he, with the conquering Sons of Mil, set foot on Ireland, there are similar transformations, attributed to certain heroes like Taliessin (see the *Mabinogion*) and Tuan mac Cairill during their disembodied states after death and until re-birth. But these transformations seem to echo poetically, and often rationally, a very mystical Celtic pantheism, in which Man, regarded as having evolved upwards through all forms and conditions of existence, is at one with all creation:—

I am the wind which blows o'er the sea;  
I am the wave of the deep;  
I am the bull of seven battles;  
I am the eagle on the rock;  
I am a tear of the sun;  
I am the fairest of plants;  
I am a boar for courage;  
I am a salmon in the water;  
I am a lake in the plain;  
I am the world of knowledge;  
I am the head of the battle-dealing spear;  
I am the god who fashions fire in the head;

Who spreads light in the gathering on the mountain?  
 Who foretells the ages of the moon?  
 Who teaches the spot where the sun rests?

And Amairgen also says:—‘I am,’ [Taliessin] ‘I have been’ (*Book of Invasions*; cf. *Voy. of Bran*, ii. 91–2; cf. Rhys, *Hib. Lect.*, p. 549; cf. Skene, *Four Ancient Books*, i. 276 ff.).

In later times, especially among non-bardic poets, there has been a similar tendency to misinterpret this primitive mystical Celtic pantheism into the corrupt form of the re-birth doctrine, namely transmigration of the human soul into animal bodies. Dr. Douglas Hyde has sent to me the following evidence:—‘I have a poem, consisting of nearly one hundred stanzas, about a pig who ate an Irish manuscript, and who by eating it recovered human speech for twenty-four hours and gave his master an account of his previous embodiments. He had been a right-hand man of Cromwell, a weaver in France, a subject of the Grand Signor, &c. The poem might be about one hundred or one hundred and fifty years old.’ It is probable that the poet who composed this poem intended to add a touch of modern Irish humour by making use of the pig. We should, nevertheless, bear in mind that the pig (or, as is more commonly the rule, the wild boar) holds a very curious and prominent position in the ancient mythology of Ireland, and of Wales as well. It was regarded as a magical animal (cf. p. 451 n.); and, apparently, was also a Druid symbol, whose meaning we have lost. Possibly the poet may have been aware of this. If so, he does not necessarily imply transmigration of the human soul into animal bodies; but is merely employing symbolism.

403. See *Taliessin* in the *Mabinogion*, and the *Book of Taliessin* in Skene’s *Four Ancient Books*, i. 523 ff.; cf. Nutt, *Voy. of Bran*, ii. 84, and Rhys, *Hib. Lect.*, pp. 548, 551.

404. Cf. Rhys, *Hib. Lect.*, pp. 548–50.

405. Cf. Rhys, *Hib. Lect.*, p. 259; and *Arth. Leg.*, p. 252.

406. Loth, *Les Mabinogion, Kulhwch et Olwen*, p. 187 n.

407. *Le Morte D’Arthur*, Book XXI, c. vii.

408. See works on Egyptian mythology and religion, by Maspero; also Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic*, p. 84, &c.

409. F. L. Griffith, *Stories of the High-priests of Memphis* (Oxford, 1900), c. iii. The text of this story is written on the back of two Greek documents, bearing the date of the seventh year of the Emperor Claudius (A. D. 46–7), not before published.

410. It is interesting to compare with this episode the episodes of how the magic of St. Patrick prevailed over the magic of the Druids when the old and the new religions met in warfare on the Hill of Tara, in the presence of the high king of Ireland and his court.

411. E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians* (London, 1904), p. 3.

412. Prescott, *Conquest of Mexico and Conquest of Peru*.

413. W. Crooke, *The Legends of Krishna*, in *Folk-Lore*, xi. 2–3 ff.

414. *Laws of Manu*, vii. 8, trans, by G. Bühler.
415. A. B. Cook, *European Sky-God*, in *Folk-Lore*, xv. 301–4.
416. Cf. Lucian, *Somn.*, 17, &c. See Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 13; also Tertullian, *De Anima*, c. xxviii, where Pythagoras is described as having previously been Aethalides, and Euphorbus, and the fisherman Pyrrhus.
417. Cf. Huc, *Souvenirs d'un voyage dans la Tartarie et le Thibet*, i. 279 ff.
418. The doctrine of kingly rule by divine right was substituted after the conversion of the Roman Empire for the very ancient belief that the emperor was a god incarnate (not necessarily reincarnate); and the same christianized aspect of a pre-Christian doctrine stands behind the English kingship at the present day.
419. A curious parallel to this Irish doctrine that through re-birth one suffers for the sins committed in a previous earth-life is found in the Christian scriptures, where in asking Jesus about a man born blind, 'Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?' the disciple exhibits what must have been a popular Jewish belief in re-birth quite like the Celtic one. See St. John ix. 1–2. Though the Rabbis admitted the possibility of ante-natal sin in thought, this passage seems to point unmistakably to a Jewish re-birth doctrine.
420. It is interesting to note in connexion with these two complementary ideas what has been written by Mr. Standish O'Grady concerning strange phenomena witnessed at the time of Charles Parnell's funeral:—'While his followers were committing Charles Parnell's remains to the earth, the sky was bright with strange lights and flames. Only a coincidence possibly; and yet persons not superstitious have maintained that there is some mysterious sympathy between the human soul and the elements.... Those strange flames recalled to my memory what is told of similar phenomena said to have been witnessed when tidings of the death of the great Christian Saint, Columba, overran the north-west of Europe, as perhaps truer than I had imagined.'—*Ireland: Her Story*, pp. 211–12.
421. Cf. M. Lenihan, *Limerick; its History and Antiquities* (Dublin, 1866), p. 725.
422. I take this to mean, somewhat as in the similar case of Dechtire, the mother of Cuchulainn (see p. 369, above), that the kind of soul or character which will be reincarnated in the child is determined by the psychic prenatal conditions which a mother consciously or unconsciously may set up. If this interpretation, as it seems to be, is correct, we have in this Welsh belief a surprising comprehension of scientific laws on the part of the ancient Welsh Druids—from whom the doctrine comes—which equals, and surpasses in its subtlety, the latest discoveries of our own psychological embryology, criminology, and so-called laws of heredity.
423. The reader is referred to the Rev. T. M. Morgan's latest publication, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Newchurch, Carmarthenshire* (Carmarthen, 1910), pp. 155–6.
424. I found, however, that the original re-birth doctrine has been either misinterpreted or else corrupted—after Dr. Tylor's theory—into transmigration into animal bodies among certain Cornish miners in the St. Just region.

425. The primitive character of the Incarnation doctrine is clear: Origen, in refuting a Jewish accusation against Christians, apparently the natural outgrowth of deep-seated hatred and religious prejudice on the part of the Jews, that Jesus Christ was born through the adultery of the Virgin with a certain soldier named Panthera, argues ‘that every soul, for certain mysterious reasons (I speak now according to the opinions of Pythagoras, and Plato, and Empedocles, whom Celsus frequently names), is introduced into a body, and introduced according to its deserts and former actions’. And, according to Origen’s argument, to assign to Jesus Christ a birth more disgraceful than any other is absurd, because ‘He who sends souls down into the bodies of men’ would not have thus ‘degraded Him who was to dare such mighty acts, and to teach so many men, and to reform so many from the mass of wickedness in the world’. And Origen adds:—‘It is probable, therefore, that this soul also which conferred more benefit by its residence in the flesh than that of many men (to avoid prejudice, I do not say “all”), stood in need of a body not only superior to others, but invested with all excellence’ (*Origen against Celsus*, Book I, c. xxxii).

It is interesting to compare with Origen’s theology the following passage from the *Pistis Sophia*, wherein Jesus in the alleged esoteric discourse to his disciples refers to the pre-existence of their souls:—‘I took them from the hands of the twelve saviours of the treasure of light, according to the command of the first mystery. These powers, therefore, I cast into the wombs of your mothers, when I came into the world, and they are those which are in your bodies this day’ (*Pistis Sophia*, i. II, Mead’s translation).

426. Cf. Nutt, *Voy. of Bran*, ii. 27 ff., 45 ff., 54 ff., 98–102.

427. Cf. *ib.*, p. 105.

[428.](#) In this chapter, largely the result of my own special research and observations in Celtic archaeology, I wish to acknowledge the very valuable suggestions offered to me by Professor J. Loth, both in his lectures and personally.

[429.](#) See David MacRitchie, *Fians, Fairies, and Picts*; also his *Testimony of Tradition*.

[430.](#) Myers, in the *Survival of the Human Personality* (ii. 55–6), shows that ‘the departed spirit, long after death, seems pre-occupied with the spot where his bones are laid’. Among contemporary uncultured races there exists a theory parallel to this one arrived at through careful scientific research, namely, that ghosts haunt graves and monuments connected with the dead: according to the Australian Arunta the ‘double’ hovers near its body until the body is reduced to dust, the spirit or soul of the deceased having separated from this ‘double’ or ghost at the time of death or soon afterwards (Spenser and Gillen, *Nat. Tribes of Cent. Aust.*).

[431.](#) See *Les Grottes*, t. i; *Les Menhirs*, *Les Dolmens*, *Les Tumulus*, and *Cultes et observances mégalithiques*, t. iv.

[432.](#) On April 17, 1909, at Carnac, in a natural fissure in the body of the finest menhir at the head of the Alignment of Kermario, I found quite by chance, while making a very careful examination of the geological structure of the menhir, a Roman Catholic coin (or medal) of St. Peter. The place in the menhir where this coin was discovered is on the south side about fifteen inches above the surface of the ground. The menhir is very tall and smoothly rounded, and there is no possible way for the coin to have fallen into the fissure by accident. Nor is there any probability

that the coin was placed there without a serious purpose; and it is an object such as only an adult would possess. An examination of the link remaining on the coin, which no doubt formerly connected it with a necklace or string of prayer-beads, shows that it has been purposely opened so as to free it at the time it was deposited in the stone. Had the coin been accidentally torn away from a chain or string of prayer-beads the link would have presented a different sort of opening. But it would be altogether unreasonable to suppose that by any sort of chance the coin could have reached the place where I found it. I showed the coin to M. Z. Le Rouzic, of the Carnac Museum, and he considers it, as I do, as evidence or proof of a cult rendered to stones here in Brittany. The coin must have been secretly placed in the menhir by some pious peasant as a direct *ex voto* for some favour received or demanded. The coin is somewhat discoloured, and has probably been some years in the stone, though it cannot be very old. And the offering of a coin to the spirit residing in a menhir is parallel to throwing coins, pins, or other objects into sacred fountains, which, as we know, is an undisputed practice.

[433.](#) Cf. A. C. Kruijt, *Het Animisme in den Indischen Archipel*; quoted in Crawley's *Idea of the Soul*, p. 133.

[434.](#) Cf. Weidemann, *Ancient Egyptian Doct. Immortality*, p. 21.

[435.](#) Cf. Mahé, *Essai*.

[436.](#) Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 143 ff., 169, 172.

[437.](#) Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, c. i.

[438.](#) Mahé, *Essai*, p. 230.

[439.](#) A famous controversy exists as to whether the Coronation Stone now in Westminster Abbey is the *Lia Fáil*, or whether the pillar-stone still at Tara is the *Lia Fáil*. See article by E. S. Hartland in *Folk-Lore*, xiv. 28–60.

[440.](#) These 'idols' probably were not true images, but simply unshaped stone pillars planted on end in the earth; and ought, therefore, more properly to be designated fetishes.

[441.](#) Stokes, in *Rev. Celt.*, i. 260; Rhÿs, *Hib. Lect.*, pp. 200–1.

[442.](#) Very much first-class evidence suggests that the menhir was regarded by the primitive Celts both as an abode of a god or as a seat of divine power, and as a phallic symbol (cf. Jubainville, *Le culte des menhirs dans le monde celtique*, in *Rev. Celt.*, xxvii. 313). As a phallic symbol, the menhir must have been inseparably related to a Celtic sun-cult; because among all ancient peoples where phallic worship has prevailed, the sun has been venerated as the supreme masculine force in external nature from which all life proceeds, while the phallus has been venerated as the corresponding force in human nature.

[443.](#) *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 137.

[444.](#) Professor J. Loth says:—'*Étymologiquement, le mot est composé de CROM, courbe, arque, formant creux, convexe, et de LLECH, pierre plate*' (*Rev. Celt.*, xv. 223, *Dolmen, Leach-Derch, Peulvan, Menhir, Cromlech*). In Cornwall, Wales, and Ireland, instead of the peculiarly Breton word *dolmen* (composed of *dol* [for *tol* == *tavl*], meaning *table*, and of *men* [Middle Breton

*maen*], meaning *stone*) the word *cromlech* is used. *Cromlech* is the Welsh equivalent for the Breton *dolmen*, but Breton archaeologists use *cromlech* to describe a circle formed by menhirs.

[445.](#) Rhÿs, *Hib. Lect.*, pp. 193–4.

[446.](#) *Ib.*, p. 192; from Sans-Marte's edition, pp. 108–9, 361.

[447.](#) *Ib.*, p. 193.

[448.](#) *Ib.*, pp. 194–5; cf. *Bibliotheca* of Diodorus Siculus, ii. c. 47.

[449.](#) Edith F. Carey, *Channel Island Folklore* (Guernsey, 1909).

[450.](#) Mahé, *Essai*, p. 198.

[451.](#) Mahé, *Essai*, pp. 287–9.

[452.](#) The place for holding a *gorsedd* for modern Welsh initiations, under the authority of which the Eisteddfod is conducted, must also be within a circle of stones, 'face to face with the sun and the eye of light, as there is no power to hold a *gorsedd* under cover or at night, but only where and as long as the sun is visible in the heavens' (Rhÿs, *Hib. Lect.*, pp. 208–9; from *Iolo MSS.*, p. 50).

[453.](#) Recently before the Oxford Anthropological Society, Dr. Murray argued that the satyrs of Greek drama may originally have been masked initiators in Greek initiations. (Cf. *The Oxford Magazine*, February 3, 1910, p. 173.)

[454.](#) Edith F. Carey, *op. cit.*

[455.](#) Mahé, *Essai*, pp. 126–9.

[456.](#) Mahé, *Essai*, pp. 126–9.

[457.](#) Rhÿs, *Arth. Leg.*, p. 339.

[458.](#) Edith F. Carey, *op. cit.*

[459.](#) Montelius' *Les Temps préhistoriques en Suède*, par S. Reinach, p. 126. (Paris, 1895).

[460.](#) H. Schliemann, *Mycenae* (London, 1878), p. 213.

[461.](#) Walhouse, in *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, vii. 21. These Dravidians are slightly taller than the pure Negritos, their probable ancestors; and Indian tradition considers them to be the builders of the Indian dolmens, just as Celtic tradition considers fairies and *corrigans* (often described as dark or even black-skinned dwarfs) to be the builders of dolmens and megaliths among the Celts. Apparently, in such folk-traditions, which correctly or incorrectly regard fairies, *corrigans*, or Dravidians as the builders of ancient stone monuments, there has been preserved a folk-memory of early races of men who may have been Negritos (pygmy blacks). These races, through a natural anthropomorphic process, came to be identified with the spirits of the dead and with other spiritual beings to whom the monuments were dedicated and at which they were worshipped. Here, again, the Pygmy Theory is seen at its true relative value: it is subordinate to the fundamental animism of the Fairy-Faith.

[462.](#) J. Déchelette, *Manuel d'Archéologie préhistorique* (Paris, 1908), i. 468, 302, 308, 311, 576, 610, &c.

- [463.](#) This famous chambered tumulus ‘measures nearly 700 feet in circumference, or about 225 feet in diameter, and between 40 and 50 feet in height’ (G. Coffey, in *Rl. Ir. Acad. Trans.* [Dublin, 1892], xxx. 68).
- [464.](#) G. Coffey, in *Rl. Ir. Acad. Trans.*, xxx. 73–92.
- [465.](#) Fol. 190 b; trans. O’Curry, *Lectures*, p. 505.
- [466.](#) Mr. Coffey quotes from the *Senchus-na-Relec*, in *L. U.*, this significant passage:—‘The nobles of the Tuatha De Danann were used to bury at Brugh (i.e. the Dagda with his three sons; also Lugaidh, and Oe, and Ollam, and Ogma, and Etan the Poetess, and Corpre, the son of Etan)’ (G. Coffey, op. cit., xxx. 77). The manuscript, however, being late and directly under Christian influence, echoes but imperfectly very ancient Celtic tradition: the immortal god-race are therein rationalized by the transcribers, and made subject to death.
- [467.](#) W. C. Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland* (London, 1897), ii. 346 n.
- [468.](#) As translated in the *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 109–11.
- [469.](#) Borlase, op. cit., ii. 346–7 n.
- [470.](#) Borlase, op. cit., ii. 346–7 n.
- [471.](#) *Ib.*, ii. 347 n.
- [472.](#) A good example of a saint’s stone bed can be seen now at Glendalough, the stone bed of St. Kevin, high above a rocky shore of the lake.
- [473.](#) Coffey, op. cit., xxx. 73–4, from R. I. A. MS., by Michael O’Longan, dated 1810, p. 10, and translated by Douglas Hyde.
- [474.](#) Coffey, op. cit., xxv. 73–4, from R. I. A. MS. by Michael O’Longan, dated 1810, p. 10, and trans. by Douglas Hyde.
- [475.](#) Borlase, op. cit., ii. 347 n.
- [476.](#) O’Donovan, *Four Masters*, i. 22 n.
- [477.](#) Rhÿs, *Hib. Lect.*, pp. 148–50.
- [478.](#) Cf. O’Curry, *Manners and Customs*, ii. 122; iii. 5, 74, 122; Rhÿs, *Hib. Lect.*, pp. 150, 150 n.; Jubainville, *Essai d’un Catalogue*, p. 244.
- [479.](#) Rhÿs, *Hib. Lect.*, p. 194.
- [480.](#) Math ab Mathonwy’s Irish counterpart is Math mac Umóir, the magician (*Book of Leinster*, f. 9<sup>b</sup>; cf. Rhÿs, *Trans. Third Inter. Cong. Hist. Religions*, Oxford, 1908, ii. 211).
- [481.](#) Rhÿs, *ib.*, pp. 225–6; cf. R. B. *Mabinogion*, p. 60; *Triads*, i. 32, ii. 20, iii. 90. A fortified hill-top now known as Pen y Gaer, or ‘Hill of the Fortress’, on the western side of the Conway, on a mountain within sight of the railway station of Tal y Cafn, Carnarvonshire, is regarded by Sir John Rhÿs as the site of a long-forgotten cult of Math the Ancient. (Rhÿs, *ib.*, p. 225).
- [482.](#) This stone basin, now in the centre of the inner chamber, seems originally to have stood in the east recess, the largest and most richly inscribed. It is 4 feet long, 3 feet 6 inches across, and 1

foot thick. (Coffey, op. cit., xxx. 14, 21).

[483.](#) Cf. W. M. Flinders Petrie, *The Pyramids and Temples of Gizeh* (London, 1883), p. 201.

[484.](#) All of the chief megaliths of this type, together with the chief alignements, which I have personally inspected—with the aid of a compass—in Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany, are definitely aligned east and west. It cannot be said, however, that *all* megalithic monuments throughout Celtic countries show definite orientation (see Déchelette's *Manuel d'Archéologie*).

[485.](#) L. P. McCarty, *The Great Pyramid Jeezeh* (San Francisco, 1907), p. 402.

[486.](#) Jubainville, *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, p. 28.

[487.](#) Maspero, *Les Contes populaires de l'Égypte Ancienne*,<sup>3</sup> p. 74 n.

[488.](#) Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 426.

[489.](#) W. H. Prescott, *Conquest of Peru*, i, c. 3.

[490.](#) Rochefort, *Iles Antilles*, p. 365; cf. Tylor, *P. C.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 424.

[491.](#) Colebrooke, *Essays*, vols. i, iv, v; cf. Tylor, *P. C.*,<sup>4</sup> 425.

[492.](#) *Illus. Hist. and Pract. of Thugs* (London, 1837), p. 46; cf. Tylor, *P. C.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 425.

[493.](#) Augustin, *de Serm. Dom. in Monte*, ii. 5; cf. Tylor, *P. C.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 427–8.

[494.](#) Ezek. viii. 16. The popular opinion that Christians face the east in prayer, or have altars eastward because Jerusalem is eastward, does not fit in with facts.

[495.](#) Cf. Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic*, p. 88; also Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 48–9.

[496.](#) Though not a Mason, the writer draws his knowledge from Masons of the highest rank, and from published works by Masons like Mr. Carty's *The Great Pyramid Jeezeh*.

[497.](#) Cf. Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, ii. 347 n.

[498.](#) C. Piazzzi Smyth, *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid* (London, 1890).

[499.](#) Flinders Petrie, *The Pyramids and Temples of Gizeh*, pp. 169, 222.

[500.](#) C. Piazzzi Smyth, op. cit.

[501.](#) In 1770, when New Grange apparently was not covered with a growth of trees as now, Governor Pownall visited it and described it as like a pyramid in general outline: 'The pyramid in its present state' is 'but a ruin of what it was' (Coffey, op. cit., xxx. 13).

[502.](#) Le Dr. G. de C., *Locmariaquer et Gavv'inis* (Vannes, 1876), p. 18.

[503.](#) According to Le Dr. G. de C., op. cit., p. 18.

[504.](#) Mr. Coffey says of similar details in Irish tumuli:—'In the construction of such chambers it is usual to find a sort of sill or low stone placed across the entrance into the main chamber, and at the openings into the smaller chambers or recesses; such stones also occur laid at intervals across the bottom of the passages. This forms a marked feature in the construction at Dowth,



and in the cairns on the Loughcrew Hills, but is wholly absent at New Grange' (op. cit., xxx. 15). New Grange, however, has suffered more or less from vandalism, and originally may have contained similar stone sills.

[505.](#) Flinders Petrie, *The Pyramids and Temples of Gizeh*, p. 216.

[506.](#) Maspero, op. cit., p. 69 n., &c. The world-wide anthropomorphic tendency to construct tombs for the gods and for the dead after the plan of earthly dwellings is as evident in the excavations at Mycenae as in ancient Egypt and in Celtic lands.

507. Cf. Bruns, *Canones apostolorum et conciliorum saeculorum*, ii. 133.

508. Cf. F. Maassen, *Concilia aevi merovingici*, p. 133.

509. Cf. Boretius, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, i. 59; for each of the above references cf. Jubainville, *Le culte des menhirs dans le monde celtique*, in *Rev. Celt.*, xxvii. 317.

510. Cf. Mahé, *Essai*, p. 427.

511. See Villemarqué *sur Bretagne*.

512. Cf. Mahé, *Essai*, p. 326; quoted from *De Glor. Conf.*, c. 2.

513. Cf. Mahé, *Essai*, p. 326; quoted from *De Glor. Conf.*, c. 2.

514. Cf. Mahé, *Essai*, p. 326; quoted from *Goth.*, lib. ii.

515. A. W. Moore, in *Folk-Lore*, v. 212–29.

516. Cf. Rhys, *Arthurian Legend*, p. 247.

517. Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, iii. 729.

518. Stokes, *Tripartite Life of Patrick*, pp. 99–101.

519. *Ib.*, text, pp. 123, 323, and Intro., p. 159.

520. Book II, 69–70; see our study, p. 267.

521. Rennes *Dinnshenchas*, Stokes's trans. in *Rev. Celt.*, xv. 457.

522. Cf. Mahé, *Essai*, p. 323.

523. The Celts may have viewed the mistletoe on the sacred oak as the seat of the tree's life, because in the winter sleep of the leafless oak the mistletoe still maintains its own foliage and fruit, and like the heart of a sleeper continues pulsing with vitality. The mistletoe thus being regarded as the heart-centre of the divine spirit in the oak-tree was cut with a golden sickle by the arch-druid clad in pure white robes, amid great religious solemnity, and became a vicarious sacrifice or atonement for the worshippers of the tree god. (Cf. Frazer, *G. B.*,<sup>2</sup> iii. 447 ff.)

524. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xvi. 95; cf. Rhys, *Hib. Lect.*, p. 218.

525. *Dissert.*, viii; cf. Rhys, *ib.*, p. 219.

526. Meineke's ed., xii. 5, 1; cf. Rhys, *ib.*, p. 219. The oak-tree is pre-eminently the holy tree of Europe. Not only Celts, but Slavs, worshipped amid its groves. To the Germans it was their chief god; the ancient Italians honoured it above all other trees; the original image of Jupiter on

- the Capitol at Rome seems to have been a natural oak-tree. So at Dodona, Zeus was worshipped as immanent in a sacred oak. Cf. Frazer, *G. B.*,<sup>2</sup> iii. 346 ff.
527. Cf. Mahé, *Essai*, pp. 333–4; quotation from *Hist. du Maine*, i. 17.
528. Cf. Mahé, *Essai*, p. 334; quoted from *Lib. VII, indict. i, epist. 5*.
529. Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, p. 409.
530. Cf. Wood-Martin, *Traces of the Older Faiths in Ireland*, i. 305.
531. W. Gregor, *Notes on Beltene Cakes*, in *Folk-Lore*, vi. 5.
532. Temple, *Legends of the Panjab*, in *Folk-Lore*, x. 406.
533. Lefèvre, *Le Culte des Morts chez les Latins*, in *Rev. Trad. Pop.*, ix. 195–209.
534. See *Folk-Lore*, vi. 192.
535. The term ‘People of Peace’ seems, however, to have originated from confounding *sid*, ‘fairy abode,’ and *sid*, ‘peace.’
536. Cf. *Le Cycle Myth. Irl.*, p. 102.
537. The crocodile as the mystic symbol of Sîtou provides one key to unlock the mysteries of what eminent Egyptologists have erroneously called animal worship, erroneously because they have interpreted literally what can only be interpreted symbolically. The crocodile is called the ‘son of Sîtou’ in the *Papyrus magique*, Harris, pl. vi, ll. 8–9 (cf. Maspero, *Les Contes populaires de l’Égypte Ancienne*, 539. Intro., p. 56); and as the waters seem to swallow the sun as it sinks below the horizon, so the crocodile, as Sîtou representing the waters, swallows the Children of Osiris, as the Egyptians called themselves. On the other hand, Osiris is typified by the white bull, in many nations the sun emblem, white being the emblem of purity and light, while the powers of the bull represent the masculinity of the sun, which impregnates all nature, always thought of as feminine, with life germs.
538. Cf. Maspero, *op. cit.*, Intro., p. 49.
539. Cf. Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, iii. 854.
540. Cf. Lefèvre, *Rev. Trad. Pop.*, ix. 195–209.
541. J. G. Campbell collected in Scotland two versions of a parallel episode, but concerning Loch Lurgan. In both versions the flight begins by Fionn’s foster-mother carrying Fionn, and in both, when she is tired, Fionn carries her and runs so fast that when the loch is reached only her shanks are left. These he throws out on the loch, and hence its name Loch Lurgan, ‘Lake of the Shanks.’ (*The Fians*, pp. 18–19).
542. During the seventeenth century, the English government, acting through its Dublin representatives, ordered this original Cave or Purgatory to be demolished; and with the temporary suppression of the ceremonies which resulted and the consequent abandonment of the island, the Cave, which may have been filled up, has been lost.
543. Thomas Wright, *St. Patrick’s Purgatory* (London, 1844), pp. 67–8.
544. Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

545. In the face of all the legends told of pilgrims who have been in Patrick's Purgatory, it seems that either through religious frenzy like that produced in Protestant revivals, or else through some strange influence due to the cave itself after the preliminary disciplines, some of the pilgrims have had most unusual psychic experiences. Those who have experienced fasting and a rigorous life for a prescribed period affirm that there results a changed condition, physical, mental, and spiritual, so that it is very probable that the Christian pilgrims to the Purgatory, like the pagan pilgrims who 'fasted on' the Tuatha De Danann in New Grange, were in good condition to receive impressions of a psychical nature such as the Society for Psychical Research is beginning to believe are by no means rare to people susceptible to them. Neophytes seeking initiation among the ancients had to undergo even more rigorous preparations than these; for they were expected while entranced to leave their physical bodies and in reality enter the purgatorial state, as we shall presently have occasion to point out.

546. Wright, *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, pp. 62 ff.

547. L. R. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States* (Oxford, 1907), iii. 126–98, &c.

548. Cf. Athenaeus, 614 A; Aristoph., *Nubes*, 508; and Harper's *Dict. Class. Lit. and Antiq.*, p. 1615.

549. Cf. O. Seyffert, *Dict. Class. Antiquities*, trans. (London, 1895), *Mithras*.

550. Brasseur, *Mexique*, iii. 20, &c.; Tylor, *P. C.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 45.

551. Cf. Hutton Webster, *Primitive Secret Societies* (New York, 1908), p. 38, and *passim*.

552. In the ancient Greek world the annual celebration of the Mysteries drew great concourses of people from all regions round the Mediterranean; to the modern Breton world the chief religious Pardons are annual events of such supreme importance that, after preparing plenty of food for the pilgrimage, the whole family of a pious peasant of Lower Brittany will desert farm and work dressed in their beautiful and best costumes for one of these Pardons, the most picturesque, the most inspiring, and the highest folk-festivals still preserved by the Roman Church; while to Roman Catholics in all countries a pilgrimage to Lough Derg is the sacred event of a lifetime.

In the Breton Pardons, as in the purgatorial rites, we seem to see the survivals of very ancient Celtic Mysteries strikingly like the Mysteries of Eleusis. The greatest of the Pardons, the Pardon of St. Anne d'Auray, will serve as a basis for comparison; and while in some respects it has had a recent and definitely historical origin (or revival), this origin seems on the evidence of archaeology to have been a restoration, an expansion, and chiefly a Christianization of prehistoric rites then already partly fallen into decay. Such rites remained latent in the folk-memory, and were originally celebrated in honour of the sacred fountain, and probably also of Isis and the child, whose terra-cotta image was ploughed up in a neighbouring field by the famous peasant Nicolas, and naturally regarded by him and all who saw it as of St. Anne and the Holy Child. Thus, in the Pardon of St. Anne d'Auray, which extends over three days, there is a torch-light procession at night under ecclesiastical sanction; as in the Ceres Mysteries, wherein the neophytes with torches kindled sought all night long for Proserpine. There are purification rites, not especially under ecclesiastical sanction, at the holy fountain now dedicated to St. Anne, like the purification rites of the Eleusinian worshippers at the sea-shore and their visit to a holy

well. There are mystery plays, recently instituted, as in Greek initiation ceremonies; sacred processions, led by priests, bearing the image of St. Anne and other images, comparable to Greek sacred processions in which the god Iacchos was borne on the way to Eleusis. The all-night services in the dimly-lighted church of St. Anne, with the special masses in honour of the Christian saints and for the dead, are parallel to the midnight ceremonies of the Greeks in their caves of initiation and to the libations to the gods and to the spirits of the departed at Greek initiations. Finally, in the Greek mysteries there seems to have been some sort of expository sermon or exhortation to the assembled neophytes quite comparable to the special appeal made to the faithful Catholics assembled in the magnificent church of St. Anne d'Auray by the bishops and high ecclesiastics of Brittany. (For these Classical parallels compare Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, iii, *passim*.)

553. Cf. Rhys, *Hib. Lect.*, p. 411, &c.

554. O'Curry, *Lectures*, pp. 586–7.

555. There is this very significant legend on record about the Cave of Cruachan:—‘Magh Mucrime, now, pigs of magic came out of the cave of Cruachain, and that is Ireland’s gate of Hell.’ And ‘Out of it, also, came the Red Birds that withered up everything in Erin that their breath would touch, till the Ulstermen slew them with their slings.’ (*B. of Leinster*, p. 288a; Stokes’s trans., in *Rev. Celt.*, xiii. 449; cf. *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 353.)

556. Forbes, *Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern* (Edinburgh, 1874), pp. 285, 345.

557. Cf. Wright, *St. Patrick’s Purgatory*, pp. 81–2.

558. Cf. Godescard, *Vies des Saints*, xi. 24; also Bergier, *Dict. de Théol.*, v. 405.

559. Cf. Godescard, *Vies des Saints*, xi. 32. But there is some disagreement in this matter of dates: Petrus Damianus, *Vita S. Odilonis*, in the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum*, January 1, records a legend of how the Abbot Odilon decreed that November 2, the day after All Saints’ Day, should be set apart for services for the departed (cf. Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*,<sup>4</sup> ii. 37 n.).

560. Cf. Godescard, *Vies des Saints*, xi. 1 n.

561. Part II, sec. 4; c. 4, par. 8; cf. Bergier, *Dict. de Théol.*, iv. 322.

562. P. 11<sup>a</sup>, l. 19; in Stokes’s *Tripartite Life*, Intro., p. 194.

563. *Enchiridion*, chap. cx; *Testament of St. Ephrem* (ed. Vatican), ii. 230, 236; Euseb., *de Vita Constant.*, liv. iv, c. lx. 556, c. lxx. 562; cf. Godescard, *Vies des Saints*, xi. 30–1.

564. St. Ambroise, *de Obitu Theodosii*, ii. 1197; cf. Godescard, *Vies des Saints*, xi. 31 n.

565. Cf. Godescard, *Vies des Saints*, xi. 31–2.

[566.](#) I am indebted to Mr. William McDougall, M.A., Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy in the University of Oxford, for having read through and criticized the first draft of this section; and while he is in no way responsible for the views set forth herein, nevertheless his suggestions for the improvement of their scientific framework have been of very great value. I must also express my obligation to him for having suggested through his Oxford lectures a good share of the important material interwoven into chapter xii touching the vitalistic view of evolution.

- [567.](#) Cf. C. Du Prel, *Philosophy of Mysticism* (London, 1889), i. 7, 11.
- [568.](#) T. Ribot, *The Diseases of Personality*; cf. J. L. Nevius, *Demon Possession* (London, 1897), pp. 234–5.
- [569.](#) *Proc. S. P. R.* (London), v. 167; cf. A. Lang, *Making of Religion*, p. 64.
- [570.](#) W. James, *Confidences of a 'Psychical Researcher'*, in *American Magazine* (October 1909).
- [571.](#) A. Lang, *Cock Lane and Common Sense* (London, 1896), p. 35.
- [572.](#) According to Professor Freud, the well-known neurologist of Vienna, external stimuli are not admitted to the dream-consciousness in the same manner that they would be admitted to the waking-consciousness, but they are disguised and altered in particular ways (cf. S. Freud, *Die Traumdeutung*, 2nd ed., Vienna, 1909; and S. Ferenczi, *The Psychological Analysis of Dreams*, in *Amer. Journ. Psych.*, April 1910, No. 2, xxi. 318, &c.).
- [573.](#) Du Prel, op. cit., i. 135.
- [574.](#) G. F. Stout, *Mr. F. W. Myers on 'Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death'*, in *Hibbert Journal*, ii, No. 1 (London, October 1903), p. 56.
- [575.](#) F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (London, 1903), i. 131.
- [576.](#) R. L. Stevenson, *Across the Plains*, chapter on Dreams.
- [577.](#) Stout, op. cit., p. 54.
- [578.](#) Freud, op. cit.; Ferenczi, op. cit.; E. Jones, *Freud's Theory of Dreams*, in *Amer. Journ. Psych.*, April 1910, No. 2, xxi. 283–308.
- [579.](#) Freud, *The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis*, in *Amer. Journ. Psych.*, April 1910, No. 2, xxi. 203.
- [580.](#) Du Prel, op. cit., i. 33.
- [581.](#) Myers, op. cit., i. 134.
- [582.](#) Fechner, *Zentralblatt für Anthropologie*, p. 774; cf. Du Prel, op. cit., i. 92.
- [583.](#) Haddock, *Somnolism and Psychism*, p. 213; cf. Du Prel, op. cit., i. 93.
- [584.](#) Perty, *Mystische Erscheinungen*, i. 305; cf. Du Prel, op. cit., ii. 63.
- [585.](#) Kerner, *Seherin v. Prevorst*, p. 196; cf. Du Prel, op. cit., ii. 65.
- [586.](#) Chardel, *Essai de Psychologie*, p. 344; cf. Du Prel, op. cit., ii. 64.
- [587.](#) Cf. Du Prel, op. cit., i. 88–9.
- [588.](#) Myers, op. cit., chapter vi.
- [589.](#) Stout, op. cit., pp. 64, 61–2.
- [590.](#) Lang, *Mr. Myers's Theory of 'The Subliminal Self'*, in *Hibbert Journal*, ii, No. 3 (April 1904), p. 530.
- [591.](#) The peculiar and often unique characteristics of the fairy-folk of any given fairy-faith, as we have pointed out in chapter iii (pp. 233, 282), are to be regarded as being merely

anthropomorphically coloured reflections of the social life or environment of the particular ethnic group who hold the particular fairy-faith; and, as Mr. Lang here suggests, when they are stripped of these superficial characteristics, which are due to such social psychology, they become ghosts of the dead or other spiritual beings.

Our own researches lead us to the conviction that behind the purely mythical aspect of these fairy-faiths there exists a substantial substratum of real phenomena not yet satisfactorily explained by science; that such phenomena have been in the past and are at the present time the chief source of the belief in fairies, that they are the foundation underlying all fairy mythologies. We need only refer to the following phenomena observed among Celtic and other peoples, and attributed by them to 'fairy' or 'spirit' agency: (1) music which competent percipients believe to be of non-human origin, and hence by the Celts called 'fairy' music, whether this be vocal or instrumental in sound; (2) the movement of objects without known cause; (3) rappings and other noises called 'supernatural' (cf. pp. 81 n., 481–4, 488; also pp. 47, 57, 61, 67, 71, 72, 74, 88, 94, 98, 101, 120, 124, 125, 131, 132, 134, 139, 148, 156, 172, 181, 187, 213, 218, 220, &c.).

[592.](#) It is our hope that this book will help to lessen the marked deficiency of recorded testimony concerning 'fairy' beings and 'fairy' phenomena observed by reliable percipients. We have endeavoured to demonstrate that genuine 'fairy' phenomena and genuine 'spirit' phenomena are in most cases identical. Hence we believe that if 'spirit' phenomena are worthy of the attention of science, equally so are 'fairy' phenomena. The fairy-belief *in its typical or conventional aspects* (apart from the animism which we discovered at the base of the belief) is, as was pointed out in our anthropological examination of the evidence (pp. 281–2), due to a very complex social psychology. In this chapter we have eliminated all social psychology, as not being the essential factor in the Fairy-Faith. Therefore, from our point of view, Mr. Lang's implied explanation of the typical fairy-visions, that they are due to 'suggestion acting on the subconscious self', does not apply to the rarer kind of fairy visions which form part of our x-quantity (see pp. 60–6, 83–4, &c.). If it does, then it also applies to all non-Celtic visions of spirits, in ancient and in modern times; and the animistic hypothesis now accepted by most psychical researchers, namely, that discarnate intelligences exist independent of the percipient, must be set aside in favour of the non-animistic hypothesis. If, on the other hand, it be admitted that 'fairy' phenomena are, as we maintain, essentially the same as 'spirit' phenomena, then the belief in fairies ceases to be purely mythical, and 'fairy' visions by a Celtic seer who is physically and psychically sound do not seem to arise from that seer's suggestion acting on his own subconsciousness; but certain types of 'fairy' visions undoubtedly do arise from suggestion, *coming from a 'fairy' or other intelligence*, acting on the conscious or subconscious content of the percipient's mind (cf. pp. 484–7).

[593.](#) Lang, *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, pp. 208, 35.

[594.](#) Sir Oliver Lodge, *Psychical Research*, in *Harper's Mag.*, August 1908 (New York and London).

[595.](#) Sir Oliver Lodge, *The Survival of Man* (London, 1909), p. 339.

[596.](#) James, *op. cit.*, pp. 587–9.

- [597.](#) Readers are referred to such authoritative works as the *Phantasms of the Living* (London, 1886), by Gurney, Myers, and Podmore; to the *Report on the Census of Hallucinations of Modern Spiritualism*, by Professor Sidgwick's Committee; to the *Naturalisation of the Supernatural* (New York and London, 1908), by F. Podmore; to the *Survival of the Human Personality*, by F. W. H. Myers; and other like works, all of which originate from the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* (London).
- [598.](#) C. Flammarion, *Mysterious Psychic Forces*, pp. 441, 431.
- [599.](#) Sir Wm. Crookes, *Notes of an Enquiry into Phenomena called Spiritual, during the years 1870–73* (London), Part III, p. 87.
- [600.](#) See *Quart. Journ. Science* (July 1871).
- [601.](#) Cf. Lang, *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, p. 281; and for other cases of objects moved without contact see *ib.*, pp. 50, 52, 53, 58, 122 ff. See also F. Podmore's article on *Poltergeists*, in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, xii. 45–115; and his *Naturalisation of the Supernatural*, chapter vii.
- [602.](#) Sir Wm. Crookes, *op. cit.*, Part III, p. 100.
- [603.](#) *Ib.*, p. 94.
- [604.](#) Lang, *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, pp. 60, 81, 139, &c.
- [605.](#) Using as a basis the data of Professor Sidgwick's Committee and the results earlier obtained by Gurney, Myers, and Podmore (see *Phantasms of the Living*), Mr. William McDougall shows concisely the probability of an apparition appearing within twelve hours of the death of the individual whom it represents. He says:—‘... of all recognized apparitions of living persons, only one in 19,000 may be expected to be a death-coincidence of this sort. But the census shows that of 1,300 recognized apparitions of living persons 30 are death-coincidences, and that is equivalent to 440 in 19,000. Hence, of recognized hallucinations, those coincident with death are 440 times more numerous than we should expect, if no causal relation obtained.’ And Mr. McDougall concludes: ‘... since good evidence of telepathic communication has been experimentally obtained, the least improbable explanation of these death-apparitions is that the dying person exerts upon his distant friend some telepathic influence which generates an hallucinatory perception of himself’ (*Hallucinations*, in *Ency. Brit.*, 11th ed., xii. 863).
- [606.](#) Myers, *op. cit.*, ii. 65, 45 ff., 49 ff., &c.
- [607.](#) Nevius, *Demon Possession*, Introduction, pp. iv, vii; pp. 240–2, 144–5. In accordance with all such phenomena, psychical researchers have logically called spirits manifesting themselves through the body of a living person possessing spirits. And as in the case of Chinese demon-possession, the phenomena of mediumship often result in the moral derangement, insanity, or even suicide on the part of ‘mediums’ who so unwisely exhibit it without special preparation or no preparation at all, and too often in complete ignorance of a possible gradual undermining of their psychic life, will-power, and even physical health. All of this seems to offer direct and certain evidence to sustain Christians and non-Christians in their condemnation of all forms of necromancy or calling up of spirits. The following statement will make our position towards mediumship of the most common kind clear:

In Druidism, for one example, disciples for training in magical sciences are said to have spent twenty years in severe study and special psychical training before deemed fit to be called Druids and thus to control daemons, ghosts, or all invisible entities capable of possessing living men and women. And even now in India and elsewhere there is reported to be still the same ancient course of severe disciplinary training for candidates seeking magical powers. But in modern Spiritualism conditions are altogether different in most cases, and ‘mediums’ instead of controlling with an iron will, as a magician does, spirits which become manifest in *séances*, surrender entirely their will-power and whole personality to them.

608. Cf. Sigmund Freud, *The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis*, in *Amer. Journ. Psych.*, xxi, No. 2 (April 1910).

609. The fact that all matter is capable of assuming a gaseous or invisible state furnishes good scientific reasons for postulating the actual existence of intelligent beings possessed of an invisible yet physical body. There may well be on and about our planet many distinct invisible organic life-forms undiscovered by zoologists. To deny such a possibility would be unscientific.

610. Cf. *Communication adressée au D<sup>r</sup> J. Dupré*, p. 382 of an essay on *La Métempsychose basée sur les Principes de la Biologie et du Magnétisme physiologique*, in *Le Hasard* (Paris, 1909), by P. C. Revel. Cases of regeneration among the aged are known, and these show how the subliminal life-forces try to renew the physical body when it is worn out (cf. Revel, *ib.*, p. 372).

611. Cf. Revel, *op. cit.*, p. 295 ff.

612. If scientists discover, as they probably will in time, what they call the secret of life, they will not have discovered the secret of life at all. What they will have discovered will be the physical conditions under which life manifests itself. In other words, science will most likely soon be able to set up artificially in a laboratory such physical conditions as exist in nature naturally, and by means of which life is able to manifest itself through matter. Life will still be as great a mystery as it is to-day; though short-sighted materialists are certain to announce to an eager world that the final problem of the universe has been solved and that life is merely the resultant of a subtle chemical compound.

613. Professor Freud, after long and careful study, arrived at the following conclusion:—‘The child has his sexual impulse and activities from the beginning, he brings them with him into the world, and from these the so-called normal sexuality of adults emerges by a significant development through manifold stages.’ And Dr. Sanford Bell, in an earlier writing entitled *A Preliminary Study of the Emotions of Love between the Sexes* (see *Amer. Journ. Psych.*, 1902), came to a similar conclusion (cf. Freud, *op. cit.*, pp. 207–8).

614. Cf. Hans Driesch, *The Science and Philosophy of the Organism* (London, 1908); and Henri Bergson, *L’Évolution créatrice* (Paris, 1908).

615. This Celtic view of non-personal immortality completely fits in with all the voluminous data of psychical research: after forty years of scientific research into psychics there are no proofs yet adduced that the human personality as a self-sufficient unit of consciousness survives indefinitely the death of its body. Granted that it does survive as a ghost for an undetermined period, generally to be counted in years, during which time it seems to be gradually fading out



or disintegrating, there is no reliable evidence anywhere to show that a personality *as such* has manifested through a ‘medium’ or otherwise after an interval of one thousand years, or even of five hundred years. We have, in fact, no knowledge of the survival of a human personality one hundred years after, and probably there are no good examples of such a survival twenty-five years after the death of the body. Such an eminent psychical researcher as William James recognized this drift of the data of psychics, and when he died he held the conviction that there is no personal immortality (see p. 505 n. following).

616. Though not inclined toward the vitalistic view of human evolution, M. Th. Ribot very closely approaches the Celtic view of the Ego (or individuality) as being the principle which gives unity to different personalities, but he does not have in mind personalities in the sense implied by the Celtic Esoteric Doctrine of Re-birth:—‘The Ego subjectively considered consists of a sum of conscious states’ (comparable to personalities)... ‘In brief, the Ego may be considered in two ways: either in its actual form, and then it is the sum of existing conscious states; or, in its continuity with the past, and then it is formed by the memory according to the process outlined above. It would seem, according to this view, that the identity of the Ego depended entirely upon the memory. But such a conception is only partial. Beneath the unstable compound phenomenon in all its protean phases of growth, degeneration, and reproduction, there is a something that remains: and this something is the undefined consciousness, the product of all the vital processes, constituting bodily perception and what is expressed in one word—the *caenæsthesis*.’ (*The Diseases of Memory*, pp. 107–8).

William James, the greatest psychologist of our epoch, after a long and faithful life consecrated to the search after a true understanding of human consciousness, finally arrived at substantially the same conviction as Fechner did, that there is no personal immortality, but that the personality ‘is but a temporary and partial separation and circumscription of a part of a larger whole, into which it is reabsorbed at death’ (W. McDougall, *In Memory of William James*, in *Proc. S. P. R.*, Part LXII, vol. xxv, p. 28). He thus virtually accepted the mystic’s view that the personality after the death of the body is absorbed into a higher power, which, to our mind, is comparable with the Ego conceived as the unifying principle behind personalities. In one of his last writings, James explained his belief in such a manner as to make it coincide at certain points with the view held by modern Celtic mystics which has been presented above; the difference being that, unlike these mystics, James was not prepared to say (though he raised the question) whether or not behind the ‘mother-sea’ of consciousness there is, as Fechner believed, a hierarchy of consciousnesses (themselves subordinate to still higher consciousnesses, and comparable with so many Egos or Individualities) which send out emanations as temporary human personalities. The organic psychical forms (if we may use such an expression) of such temporary human personalities would have to be regarded from James’s point of view as being built up out of the psychical elements constituting the ‘mother-sea’ of consciousness, just as the human body is built up out of the physical elements in the realm of matter:—‘Out of my experience, such as it is (and it is limited enough) one fixed conclusion dogmatically emerges, and that is this, that we with our lives are like islands in the sea, or like trees in the forest. The maple and the pine may whisper to each other with their leaves, and Conanicut and Newport hear each other’s foghorns. But the trees also commingle their roots in the darkness underground, and the islands also hang together through the ocean’s bottom. Just so there is a

continuum of cosmic consciousness, against which our individuality' (used as synonymous with personality and not in our distinct sense) 'builds but accidental fences, and into which our several minds plunge as into a mother-sea or reservoir. Our "normal" consciousness' (the personality as we distinguish it from the Ego or individuality) 'is circumscribed for adaptation to our external earthly environment, but the fence is weak in spots, and fitful influences from beyond break in, showing the otherwise unverifiable common connexion. Not only psychic research, but metaphysical philosophy and speculative biology are led in their own ways to look with favour on some such "pan-psychic" view of the universe as this.' (W. James, *The Confidences of a Psychical Researcher*, in *The American Magazine*, October 1909). Again, James wrote:—'The drift of all the evidence we have seems to me to sweep us very strongly towards the belief in some form of superhuman life with which we may, unknown to ourselves, be co-conscious.' (*A Pluralistic Universe*, New York, 1909, p. 309.)

617. W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (London, 1902), pp. 511, 236 n.
618. M. Th. Ribot, in *Diseases of Memory* (London, 1882), pp. 82–98 ff., gives numerous examples of such loss and recovery of memory.
619. Cf. Freud, op. cit., pp. 192, 204–5, &c.
620. Cf. A. Moll, *Hypnotism* (London, 1890), pp. 141 ff., 126.
621. Cf. A. Moll, *Hypnotism* (London, 1890), pp. 141 ff., 126.
622. Cf. Freud, op. cit., p. 192.
623. Freud, *Die Traumdeutung*, 2nd ed. (Vienna, 1906); cf. S. Ferenczi, *The Psychological Analysis of Dreams*, in *Amer. Journ. Psych.* (April 1910), xxi, No. 2, p. 326.
624. A similar state of high development is to be assumed for a great Celtic hero like Arthur, who were he to be re-born would (as is said to have been the case with King Mongan, the reincarnation of Finn) bring with him memory of his past: unlike the consciousness of the normal man, the consciousness of one of the Divine Ones is normally the subconsciousness, the consciousness of the individuality; and not the personal consciousness, which, like the personality, is non-permanent *in itself*. This further illustrates the Celtic theory of non-personal immortality.
625. Ribot, op. cit., p. 100 ff.
626. Cf. Lang, *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, pp. 217 ff. *Blackwood's Magazine*, cxxix (January 1881), contains a remarkable account of a child who remembered previous lives. Lord Lindsay, in his *Letters* (ed. of 1847, p. 351), refers to a feeling when he beheld the river Kadisha descending from Lebanon, of having in a previous life seen the same scene. Dickens in his *Pictures from Italy* testifies to a parallel experience. E. D. Walker, in his interesting work on *Reincarnation* (pp. 42–5) has brought together many other well-attested cases of people who likewise have thought they could remember fragments of a former state of conscious existence. In his diary, under date of February 17, 1828, Sir Walter Scott wrote as follows:—'I cannot, I am sure, tell if it is worth marking down, that yesterday, at dinner-time, I was strangely haunted by what I would call the sense of pre-existence, viz. a confused idea that nothing that passed was said for the first time.' Lockhart, *Life of Scott* (first ed.), vii. 114. Bulwer Lytton in

*Godolphin* (chapter xv), and Edgar Allen Poe in *Eureka*, record similar experiences. Mr. H. Fielding Hall, in *The Soul of a People*<sup>4</sup> (London, 1902), pp. 290–308, reports several very remarkable cases of responsible natives of Burma who stated that they could recall former lives passed by them as men and women. Mr. Hall has carefully investigated these cases, and gives us the impression that they are worthy of scientific consideration.

627. Cf. Ferenczi, op. cit., p. 316, &c. Professor Freud's theory of dreams supports entirely, but does not imply our hypothesis that some (and probably many) abnormal dreams of a rare kind, whether good or bad in tendency, may be due to the latent content of subconsciousness, out of which they undoubtedly arise, having been collected and carried over from a previous state of consciousness parallel to our present one. In respect to our present life Professor Freud holds, as a result of psycho-analysis of thousands of dream subjects, that the latent content of every dream in the adult is directly dependent upon mental processes which frequently reach back to the earliest childhood; and he gives detailed cases in illustration. In other words, there is always a latent dream-material behind the conscious dream-content, and probably a part of it was innate in the child at birth, and hence, according to our view, was pre-existent. (Cf. Ernest Jones, *Freud's Theory of Dreams*, in *Amer. Journ. Psych.*, April 1910, xxi, No. 2, pp. 301 ff.)
628. Cf. Du Prel, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, ii. 25 ff., 34 ff.
629. *The Dream of Ravan*, in *Dublin Univ. Mag.*, xliii. 468.
630. Myers, in *Proc. S. P. R.*, vii. 305.
631. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 483.
632. The esoteric teaching in many of the mystic schools of antiquity was that the atoms of each human body transmigrate through all lower forms of life during the long period supposed to intervene between death and re-birth of the individuality. This doctrine seems to be one of the main sources of the corruption which crept into the ancient re-birth doctrines and transformed many of them into doctrines of transmigration of the human soul into animal and plant bodies; and some unscrupulous priesthoods openly taught such corrupted doctrines as a means of making the ignorant populace submissive to ecclesiastical rule, the theological theory expounded by such priesthoods being that the evil-doer, but not the keeper of the letter of the canonical law, is condemned to expiate his sins through birth in brute bodies. The pure form of the mystic doctrine was that after the lapse of the long period of disembodiment the individuality reconstructs its human body anew by drawing to itself the identical atoms which constituted its previous human body—these atoms, and not the individuality, having transmigrated through all the lower kingdoms. Such an esoteric doctrine probably lies behind the exoteric Egyptian teaching that the human soul after the death of its body passes through all plant and animal bodies during a period of three thousand years, after which it returns to human embodiment. Some scholars have held that the exoteric interpretation of this theory and its consequent literal interpretation as a transmigration doctrine led the Egyptians to mummify the bodies of their dead. Cf. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book III, ll. 843–61; and Herodotus, Book II, on Egypt.
633. Cf. Dr. L. S. Fugairon's *La Survivance de l'âme, ou la Mort et la Renaissance chez les êtres vivants; études de physiologie et d'embryologie philosophiques* (Paris, 1907); cf. Revel, *Le*

*Hasard*, p. 457.

634. Darwin never considered or attempted to suggest what it is that of itself really evolves, for it cannot be the physical body which only *grows* from immaturity to maturity and then dissolves. Darwin thus overlooked the essential factor in his whole doctrine; while the Druids and other ancients, wiser than we have been willing to admit, seem not only to have anticipated Darwin by thousands of years, but also to have quite surpassed him in setting up their doctrine of re-birth, which explains both the physical and psychical evolution of man.

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### English Translation

My dear Mr. Wentz,

I recollect that, at the time of your examination on your thesis before the Faculty of Letters of the University of Rennes, one of my colleagues, my friend Professor Dottin, put to you this question:—

‘You believe, you assert, in the existence of fairies? Have you seen any?’

You answered, with equal coolness and candour:

‘No. I have made every effort to do so, and I have never seen any. But there are many things which you, sir, have not seen, and of which, nevertheless, you would not think of denying the existence. That is my attitude toward fairies.’

I am like you, my dear Mr. Wentz: I have never seen fairies. It is true that I have a very dear lady friend whom we have christened by that name [fairy], but, in spite of all her fair supernatural gifts, she is only a humble mortal. On the other hand, I lived, when a mere child, among people who had almost daily intercourse with real fairies.

That was in a little township in Lower Brittany, inhabited by peasants who were half sailors, and by sailors who were half peasants. There was, not far from the village, an ancient manor-house long abandoned by its owners, for what reason was not known exactly. It continued to be called the ‘Château’ of Lanascot, though it was hardly more than a ruin. It is true that the avenues by which one approached it had retained their feudal

aspect, with their fourfold rows of ancient beeches whose huge masses of foliage were reflected in splendid pools. The people of the neighbourhood seldom ventured into these avenues in the evening. They were supposed to be, from sunset onwards, the favourite walking-ground of a 'lady' who went by the name of *Groac'h Lanascol*, the 'Fairy of Lanascol'.

Many claimed to have met her, and described her in colours which were, however, the most varied. Some represented her as an old woman who walked all bent, her two hands leaning on a stump of a crutch with which, in autumn, from time to time she stirred the dead leaves. The dead leaves which she thus stirred became suddenly shining like gold, and clinked against one another with the clear sound of metal. According to others, it was a young princess, marvellously adorned, after whom there hurried curious little black silent men. She advanced with a majestic and queenly bearing. Sometimes she stopped in front of a tree, and the tree at once bent down as if to receive her commands. Or again, she would cast a look on the water of a pool, and the pool trembled to its very depths, as though stirred by an access of fear beneath the potency of her look.

The following strange story was told about her:—

The owners of Lanascol having desired to get rid of an estate which they no longer occupied, the manor and lands attached to it were put up to auction by a notary of Plouaret. On the day fixed for the bidding a number of purchasers presented themselves. The price had already reached a large sum, and the estate was on the point of being knocked down, when, on a last appeal from the auctioneer, a female voice, very gentle and at the same time very imperious, was raised and said:

‘A thousand francs more!’

A great commotion arose in the hall. Every one's eyes sought for the person who had made this advance, and who could only be a woman. But there was not a single woman among those present. The notary asked:

‘Who spoke?’

Again the same voice made itself heard.

‘The Fairy of Lanascoll!’ it replied.

A general break-up followed. From that time forward no purchaser has ever appeared, and, as the current report ran, that was the reason why Lanascol continued to be for sale.

I have designedly quoted to you the story of the Fairy of Lanascol, my dear Mr. Wentz, because she was the first to make an impression on me in my childhood. How many others have I come to know later on in the course of narratives from those who lived with me on the sandy beaches, in the fields or the woods! Brittany has always been a kingdom of Faerie. One cannot there travel even a league without brushing past the dwelling of some male or female fairy. Quite lately, in the course of an autumn pilgrimage to the hallucinatory forest of Paimpont (or Brocéliande), still haunted throughout by the great memories of Celtic legend, I encountered beneath the thick foliage of the Pas-du-Houx, a woman gathering faggots, with whom I did not fail, as you may well imagine, to enter into conversation. One of the first names I uttered was naturally that of Vivian.

‘Vivian!’ cried out the poor old woman. ‘Ah! a blessing on her, the good Lady! for she is as good as she is beautiful.... Without her protection my good man, who works at woodcutting, would have fallen, like a wolf, beneath the keepers’ guns....’ And she began to narrate to me ‘as how’ her husband, something of a poacher like all the woodcutters of these districts, had one night gone to watch for a roebuck in the neighbourhood of the Butte-aux-Plaintes, and had been caught red-handed by a party of keepers. He sought to fly: the keepers fired. A bullet hit him in the thigh: he fell, and was making ready to let himself be killed on the spot, rather than surrender, when there suddenly interposed between him and his assailants a kind of very thick mist which covered everything—the ground, the trees, the keepers, and the wounded man himself. And he heard a voice coming out of the mist, a voice gentle like the rustling of leaves, and murmuring in his ear: ‘Save thyself, my son: the spirit of Vivian will watch over thee till thou hast crawled out of the forest.’

‘Such were the actual words of the fairy,’ concluded the faggot-gatherer. And she crossed herself devoutly, for pious Brittany, as you know, reveres fairies as much as saints.

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I do not know if *lutins* (mischievous spirits) should be included in the fairy world, but what is certain is that this charming and roguish tribe has always abounded in our country. I have been told that formerly every house had its own. It (the *lutin*) was something like the little Roman household god. Now visible, now invisible, it presided over all the acts of domestic life. Nay more; it shared in them, and in the most effective manner. Inside the house it helped the servants, blew up the fire on the hearth, supervised the cooking of the food for men or beasts, quieted the crying of the babe lying in the bottom of the cupboard, and prevented worms from settling in the pieces of bacon hanging from the beams. Similarly there fell within its sphere the management of the byres and stables: thanks to it the cows gave milk abounding in butter, and the horses had round croups and shining coats. It was, in a word, the good genius of the house, but conditionally on every one paying to it the respect to which it had the right. If neglected, ever so little, its kindness changed into spite, and there was no unkind trick of which it was not capable towards people who had offended it, such as upsetting the contents of the pots on the hearth, entangling wool round distaffs, making tobacco unsmokeable, mixing a horse's mane in inextricable confusion, drying up the udders of cows, or stripping the backs of sheep. Therefore care was taken not to annoy it. Careful attention was paid to all its habits and humours. Thus, in my parents' house, our old maid Filie never lifted the trivet from the fire without taking the precaution of sprinkling it with water to cool it, before putting it away at the corner of the hearth. If you asked her the reason for this ceremony, she would reply to you:

‘To prevent the *lutin* burning himself there, if, presently, he sat on it.’

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Further, I suppose there should be included in the class of male fairies that *Bugul-Noz*, that mysterious Night Shepherd, whose tall and alarming outline the rural Bretons see rising in the twilight, if, by chance, they happen to return late from field-work. I have never been able to obtain

exact information about the kind of herd which he fed, nor about what was foreboded by the meeting with him. Most often such a meeting is dreaded. Yet, as one of my female informants, Lise Bellec, reasonably pointed out, if it is preferable to avoid the *Bugul-Noz* it does not from that follow that he is a harmful spirit. According to her, he would rather fulfil a beneficial office, in warning human beings, by his coming, that night is not made for lingering in the fields or on the roads, but for shutting oneself in behind closed doors and going to sleep. This shepherd of the shades would then be, take it altogether, a kind of good shepherd. It is to ensure our rest and safety, to withdraw us from excesses of toil and the snares of night, that he compels us, thoughtless sheep, to return quickly to the fold.

No doubt it is an almost similar protecting office which, in popular belief, has fallen to another male fairy, more particularly attached to the seashore, as his name, *Yann-An-Ôd*, indicates. There is not, along all the coast of Brittany or, as it is called, in all the *Armor*, a single district where the existence of this 'John of the Dunes' is not looked on as a real fact, fully proved and undeniable. Changing forms and different aspects are attributed to him. Sometimes he is a giant, sometimes a dwarf. Sometimes he wears a seaman's hat of oiled cloth, sometimes a broad black felt hat. At times he leans on an oar and recalls the enigmatic personage, possessed of the same attribute, whom Ulysses has to follow, in the *Odyssey*. But he is always a marine hero whose office it is to traverse the shores, uttering at intervals long piercing cries, calculated to frighten away fishermen who may have allowed themselves to be surprised outside by the darkness of night. He only hurts those who resist; and even then would only strike them in their own interest, to force them to seek shelter. He is, before all, one who warns. His cries not only call back home people out late on the sands; they also inform sailors at sea of the dangerous proximity of the shore, and, thereby, make up for the insufficiency of the hooting of sirens or of the light of lighthouses.

We may remark, in this connexion, that a parallel feature is observed in the legend of the old Armorican saints, who were mostly emigrants from Ireland. One of their usual exercises consisted in parading throughout the



night the coasts where they had set up their oratories, shaking little bells of wrought iron, the ringing of which, like the cries of *Yann-An-Ôd*, was intended to warn voyagers that land was near.

I am persuaded that the worship of saints, which is the first and most fervent of Breton religious observances, preserves many of the features of a more ancient religion in which a belief in fairies held the chief place. The same, I feel sure, applies to those death-myths which I have collected under the name of the Legend of the Dead among the Armorican Bretons. In truth, in the Breton mind, the dead are not dead; they live a mysterious life on the edge of real life, but their world remains fully mingled with ours, and as soon as night falls, as soon as the living, properly so called, give themselves up to the temporary sleep of death, the so-called dead again become the inhabitants of the earth which they have never left. They resume their place at their former hearth, devote themselves to their old work, take an interest in the home, the fields, the boat; they behave, in a word, like the race of male and female fairies which once formed a more refined and delicate species of humanity in the midst of ordinary humanity.

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I might, my dear Mr. Wentz, evoke many other types from this intermediate world of Breton Faerie, which, in my countrymen's mind, is not identical with this world nor with the other, but shares at once in both, through a curious mixture of the natural and supernatural. I have only intended in these hasty lines to show the wealth of material to which you have with so much conscientiousness and ardour devoted your efforts. And now may the fairies be propitious to you, my dear friend! They will do nothing but justice in favouring with all their goodwill the young and brilliant writer who has but now revived their cult by renewing their glory.

Rennes,

November 1, 1910.

# Myths

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# Mythic Powers of the Gods

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As in most mythologies, the Celtic deities have powers which reflect those supposed to be possessed by medicine-men, as well as others peculiar to themselves. These were the subject of myths taught by the Druids, who knew many things concerning the might of the immortal gods.<sup>1</sup> The gods were undying, and their abode was that of "the ever-living ones," where none ever died. Caoilte describes the Tuatha Dé Danann to St. Patrick as beings "who are unfading, and whose duration is perennial" in contrast with himself or men;<sup>2</sup> or they are "fairies or sprites with corporeal forms, endowed with immortality." Yet immortality is said to have been given them by Manannan through their drinking Goibniu's immortal beer, so that "no disease nor sickness ever attacks them," nor "decay nor old age comes upon them."<sup>3</sup> The daughter of Bodb Dearg was asked by St. Patrick what it was which maintained the gods in form and comeliness, and her answer was, "All such of us as partook of Goibniu's banquet, nor pain nor sickness troubles them."<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere this immortality seems to be dependent upon the eating of certain fragrant berries, of which it is said that "no disease attacks those who eat them, but they feel the exhilaration of wine and old mead; and were it at the age of a century, they would return again to be thirty years old." Once the Tuatha Dé Danann had played a match with the Feinn and brought from the Land of Promise crimson nuts, catkin apples, and these fragrant berries; but one of them fell to earth, and from it grew a quicken (rowan) tree, whose berries possessed these virtues. The gods sent one of their people to guard the tree—a savage, one-eyed giant, Searbhan Lochlannach, who could not be slain until struck with three blows of his iron club; and around the tree he made a wilderness, sleeping in it by night, and watching at its foot by day. Fionn demanded as *eric*, or fine, from two warriors either the head of Diarmaid or a handful of these berries; but Diarmaid overcame them, and then asked the giant for the berries. Searbhan

refused them, but by skill and strength the hero seized his club and slew him.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, even in their own immortal land, gods are slain. Perhaps this was not altogether the result of the annalistic view of the gods, for myth may have told of their death, as it did of gods elsewhere—Dionysus, Attis, Balder, Osiris. The analistic view did not hinder the continuance of myths, and divinities whose death is recorded in the *Annals* are found to be alive long after, while gods and goddesses born in pagan times appear thousands of years later to persons living in the Christian period. In spite of this perennial duration, they remained youthful and beautiful. Yet while the gods' land was pictured as a deathless, peaceful place, men still gave it certain of the traits of human life. War, wounds, and death were there, according to some stories; gods might even be slain by men; and as gods have human passions, so they may also have human weaknesses. Such is always the inconsistency of myth.

Invisibility was another divine power, innate, or acquired by donning a mantle, or from Manannan's spell, *Féth Fiada*, which was known also to Druids, poets, and Christian saints, who by it became unseen or took other forms. When the sons of Midir, assisted by the Féinn, fought against Bodb, Midir's son and Caoilte went to the *síd* of Oengus for a physician to heal Oscar's wounds; and then "there arose a *Féth Fiada* around us, so that we were invisible." In one passage Dagda is invisible, and Midir said, "We behold and are not beheld." When Manannan came to fetch his consort Fand, none saw him but the goddess, and when Lug arrived to assist Cuchulainn, he was unseen by the hero's foes. Divinities sometimes hid in a magic mist, as the Tuatha Dé Danann did on arriving in Ireland; they could appear to such mortals as they pleased, remaining unseen by others. Gods were probably not regarded as spiritual beings. Like the dead in Celtic belief, they had resplendent corporeal forms and ate and drank; but their bodily form differed from men's in that it could become invisible and was not subject to the laws of gravitation. The gods travelled through the air or appeared above men's heads.

How, then, did they appear when visible.? Sometimes in the magnificence of divinity, yet still in anthropomorphic form. Sometimes they were of vast size, like the Morrígan or the Welsh Bran, while a goddess who sought the aid of Fionn was enormous compared even with the gigantic Féinn. Sometimes they appear merely as mortals and are not recognized as gods. Instances of this are found in the story of Cuchulainn's birth, where Lug is seen, as a mortal host in a mysterious house, and in that of Merlin's father; invisible to all but his mother, and later taking human shape. Sometimes a disguise was assumed. Oengus and Midir appeared to Rib and Eochaid in the shape of hospitallers, with a haltered pack-horse, and bade them begone. Gods also took the appearance of particular mortals, as when Midir appeared to Etain as her lover Ailill, or Manannan as Fiachna to the latter's wife, or as when Pwyll and Arawn exchanged forms.<sup>6</sup> Animal forms were also assumed. Of these one favourite shape was that of birds. Morrigan appeared to Cúchulainn as a bird; so also do Devorgilla and her handmaid, the former being in love with the hero. Llew took the form of an eagle; Bude and his foster-brother that of birds when the former wished to visit his paramour, whose husband Nár slew them. Midir and Etain, Fand and Liban were seen as birds Hnked together. The gods, or *síde*, appear as deer in one story. Again, the idea of divine shape-shifting, expressed, however, in the well-known folk-tale formula of the "Transformation Com bat," is combined with the Celtic idea of rebirth in Welsh and Irish tales; and the Welsh story, *Hanes Taliesin*, a sixteenth century tale, is based on earlier poems in which this formula is already prefixed to the rebirth incident. Shape-shifting is so commonly ascribed to Taliesin that it is no wonder that the formula was attached to his story, as it also was to the Greek myth of Proteus and the Hindu story of Vikramāditya: In the poem Taliesin describes his transformations and adds,

"I have been a grain discovered  
Which grew on a hill . . .  
A hen received me  
With ruddy claws and parting comb.

I rested nine nights  
In her womb a child."[7](#)

## PLATE VII

### THREE-HEADED GOD

This triple-headed divinity (cf. p. 8) may possibly be another form of Cernunnos (see Plate XVI). For another representation see Plate XII, and for a three-headed deity of the Elbe Slavs cf. pp. 284–85 and see Plate XXXIV, 3. From a block of stone found at Paris, now in the Musée Carnavalet in that city.



The *Hanes Taliesin* represents earlier myths about the hero and Cerridwen, the latter being a Brythonic goddess. Cerridwen, who dwelt below a lake, became hostile to Gwion Bach because he obtained the inspiration which she had intended for her son. The goddess pursued him, but he changed himself to a hare, and she took the form of a greyhound, after which the pair successively became fish and otter, bird and hawk, grain of wheat and hen. Cerridwen as a hen swallowed the grain, and gave birth to a beautiful child, whom she cast into the sea, but he was rescued by Elphin and obtained the name of Taliesin.<sup>8</sup>

In most versions of the Transformation Combat the opponents are males, and therefore one cannot give birth to the other; but by an ingenious device the compiler of the Irish myth of *The Two Szvine-Herds* (*Cophur in dá muccida*), an introductory story to the *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, surmounted this difficulty. The swine-herds were subordinate divinities—Friuch, herd of the god Bodb, king of the *síd* of Munster, and Rucht, herd of Ochoall Oichni, king of the *síd* of Connaught. They could take any shape, and there was friendship between them. When there was mast in Munster, Rucht fed his swine there; and Friuch brought his herd to Connaught in the same way. People stirred up a quarrel between them, however, and Friuch put spells on Rucht's swine so that they should not eat the mast of Munster, while Rucht did the same to Friuch's pigs. When the swine became thin, the gods took their office from the herds, and Friuch and Rucht turned themselves into ravens and for a year reviled each other in Connaught and for a year in Munster. Resuming their own shape, they announced that there would yet be many corpses and much wailing because of them. Now they took the form of water-beasts and were seen for a year in the Suir and for another in the Shannon, devouring each other, and appearing as large as hills, until they came ashore as men, telling Ochoall that they must still take other shapes to test their strength. They became champions, one of Bodb's host, the other of Fergna, King of the *síd* of Nento-fo-hiuscne, their term in this form ending with a fight which lasted three days and nights, and in which they gave such wounds that their lungs were visible. Next they became demons, a third of the people dying with fright at seeing them; while in another version



transformations into stags and dragons are added. Finally they became worms, one in a spring in Connaught, the other in the river Cruind in Ulster. Queen Medb came one day to the spring to draw water, and the little animal, speckled with all colors, jumped into her dish. She spoke to it, and it told her that it had been in many shapes, and bade her take Ailill as her husband, after which it returned into the spring. That day Fiachna washed in the river Cruind and was frightened at seeing a tiny beast which told him of the luck about to befall him, and how it was Bodb's swine-herd. It besought Fiachna to feed it for a year, as the other had begged of Medb, and later it told him of a future combat with the other beast. Next day one of Fiachna's cows would swallow it when drinking, as one of Medb's kine would swallow the other; and as a result Medb's cow bore Findbennach ("White-Horn"), and Fiachna's the Donn or Brown Bull of Cúalnge. No bull dared bellow before either, and great war was caused in Ireland on their account.<sup>9</sup> The *Dindsenchas* speaks of seven shapes which the swine-herds took, but describes five only—swine-herds, birds, wolves, trout, and worms—and it also tells how a bull-calf of the Donn's was killed by White-Horn.<sup>10</sup>

A folk-tale analogy to this myth occurs in a West Irish collection. Two heroes at enmity fought until they were old men, then as puppies until they were old dogs, then as young bulls, as stallions, and as birds, until one was slain, his body falling on the other and killing him. The rebirth incident is lacking here.<sup>11</sup>

In the story which narrates how King Mongan recovered his wife from the King of Leinster his feats were originally those of a divine namesake. Taking the form of a cleric, he gave that of another cleric to his attendant and won entrance to the King's fort and to his wife. He kissed her, but when the attendant hag cried out, he sent a magic breath at her, and what she had seen was no longer clear in her mind, after which he shaped a sharp spike on which she fell and was killed. His attempt to recover his wife failed, however, and at a later time he took the guise of Aed, son of the King of Connaught, transforming a hag into the shape of Aed's beautiful wife, Ibhell. The King of Leinster fell in love with her and exchanged Mongan's wife to the pretended Aed for her; but the pair escaped, and great was the King's

disgust to find Ibhell in the form of a hag. Mongan also made a river with a bridge over it, where none had ever been before, and in it he set the two clerics whose shapes he had borrowed.<sup>12</sup>

The gods could likewise transform each other. Etain was changed by Fuamnach into an insect, as a preliminary to her rebirth, and we have seen how the children of Ler were transformed into swans by their jealous step-mother. Ler heard them singing, yet god though he was, he could not disenchant' them, just as Manannan was unable to change Aoife from the shape of a crane into which the jealous luchra had turned her.<sup>13</sup> The gods remained for three hundred years listening to the music of the swans, which caused happiness to all who heard it; and after many sufferings the birds met the sons of Bodb, who spoke to them of the divinities, while Fionnghula sang of her former happiness when she enjoyed the guileless teaching of Manannan, the convocations of Bodb, the voice of Oengus, and the sweetness of his kisses. We have seen how the children, after their disenchantment, died in the Christian faith. This old and touching myth has received a Christian ending: how it originally told the further fate of Ler's children is unknown.

The gods also transformed mortals. Morrígan brought a bull to a cow over which Odrus watched, and which followed the bull when Morrigan went into the cave of Cruachan. Odrus pursued through the cave to the *síd* within, but there she fell asleep, and the goddess awoke her, sang spells over her, and made of her a pool of water.<sup>14</sup> This is partly paralleled by another story in which elves, or *siabhra*, transformed Aige into a fawn and sent her round Ireland. Later she was killed, and nothing remained of her but a bag of water which was thrown into a river, thenceforward named after her.<sup>15</sup> A more curious transformation is that by which the god Oengus changed his four kisses into as many birds, in order that they might satirize the nobles of Erin, until a Druid by a stratagem stopped them.<sup>16</sup> As has been seen, the kisses of Oengus were dear to Fionnghula. The souls of the righteous appear sometimes as white birds, and those of the wicked as ravens, in Christian documents—a conception which is probably of pagan origin.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, to show how the memory of the Tuatha Dé Danann and their powers survived into later centuries the story of *O'Donnel's Kern* may be cited. In this, Manannan appears as a kern, or serving-man, at the houses of historic personages of sixteenth century Ireland. He plays such music as never was heard, bewitching men to slumber; he is a marvellous conjuror, producing out of his bag hound, hare, dog-boy, and lady, who all climb a silken thread which he tosses upward to a cloud; he performs miracles of healing; he takes off a man's head and puts it on again; and from each place where he goes he suddenly disappears from human sight, none knowing whither he has vanished.<sup>18</sup> Folk-memory thus preserved much of the old conception of the gods.

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Caesar, *De bello Gallico*, vi. 14.
- <sup>2</sup>S. H. O'Grady, ii. 203.
- <sup>3</sup>E. O'Curry, in *Atlantis*, iii. 387 f. (1862).
- <sup>4</sup>S. H. O'Grady, ii. 243.
- <sup>5</sup>S. H. O'Grady, in *TOS* iii. 113 f. (1855); see *infra*, pp. 171–72.
- <sup>6</sup>6. For other instances see *infra*, pp. 59, 62-63, 80, 154, 184-85.
- <sup>7</sup>Skene [a], i. 532; J. G. Evans, *Llyvyr Taliesin*, p. 26.
- <sup>8</sup>Guest, iii. 356 ff.
- <sup>9</sup>E. Windisch, in *IT* III. i. 235 f.
- <sup>10</sup>W. Stokes, in *RCel* xv. 444 (1894).
- <sup>11</sup>Larminie, p. 82.
- <sup>12</sup>*Book of Fermoy*, 131 a; Nutt [c], i. 64 ff.
- <sup>13</sup>MacNeill, i. 119 (*ITS*).
- <sup>14</sup>W. Stokes, in *RCel* xv. 307 (1894).
- <sup>15</sup>W. Stokes, *ib.* xvi. 65 (1895).
- <sup>16</sup>*ib.* p. 69.
- <sup>17</sup>W. Stokes, *Ib.* ii. 200 (1874).
- <sup>18</sup>S. H. O'Grady, ii. 311 ff.

# Myths of Origins

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Savage and barbaric peoples possess many grotesque myths of the origin of various parts of nature. In recently existing Celtic folk-lore and in stories preserved mainly in the *Dindsenchas* conceptions not unlike these are found and doubtless were handed down from the pre-Christian period, whether Celtic or pre-Celtic, while in certain instances a saint takes the place of an older pagan personage. In Brittany and elsewhere in France natural features—rivers, lakes, hills, rocks—are associated in their origin with giants, fairies, witches, or the devil, just as in other Celtic regions and, indeed, in all parts of the world. Many traditions, however, connect them with the giant Gargantua, who was not a creation of Rabelais' brain, but was borrowed from popular belief. He may have been an old Celtic god or hero, popular and, therefore, easily surviving in folk-memory, and may also be the Gurguntius, son of Belinus, King of Britain, mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis. Many hills or isolated rocks or erratic boulders are described as his teeth, or as stones thrown, or vomited, or ejected by him; and rivers or lakes were formed from his blood or urine, numerous traditions regarding these being collected by Sébillot in his book on Gargantua.<sup>1</sup>

In Irish story similar traditions are found and are of a *naïve* character. Manannan shed "three drops of grief" for his dead son, and these became three lochs, as in the Finnish *Kalevala* a mother's tears are changed into rivers. Again, a king's daughter died of shame when her lover saw her bathing, and her foster-mother's tears made Loch Gile. In other instances lochs are formed by water pouring forth at the digging of a grave, e.g. that of Manannan, slain in battle, or that of Garman, son of Glas. Or a well is the source of a loch, because some one was drowned in it, or because its waters poured forth over intruders, or because of the breaking of a tabu connected with it, e.g. leaving its cover off. In two instances already cited the urine of a horse belonging to a god produced a loch,<sup>2</sup> and more curious still is the

myth of the woman Odras whom the Morrigan changed into a pool of water.<sup>3</sup>

An interesting story tells of the magic creation of a wood. Gaible, son of Nuada, stole a bundle of twigs which Ainge, daughter of Dagda, had gathered to make a tub, for Dagda had made one which dripped during flood-tide, and she wished for a better one. Gaible threw away the bundle, and it became a wood springing up in every direction.<sup>4</sup> This is of a very primitive character and resembles the folk-tale incident of the Transformation Flight, in which a twig, comb, or reed thrown down by fugitives becomes a thick forest or bush impeding the pursuers.<sup>5</sup> Curious, too, is the story of Codal, who on a hillock fed his fosterling Ériu, from whom is named Eriu's Island (Ireland). As she grew, the hillock increased with her, and had she not complained to Codal of the sun's heat and the cold wind, it would have grown until Ireland was filled with the mountain. Another story, recalling that of the Australian Bunjel's slicing earth with a knife into creeks and valleys, tells how Fergus, with Cúchulainn's sword, the *caladbolg* out of the *síd* sheared the tops of three mountains, which are now "Meath's three bare ones," while as a counter blow Cúchulainn did the same to three hills in Athlone.<sup>6</sup> In another tale Fergus, irritated against Conchobar, struck three blows on the ground and thus caused three hills to arise which will endure for ever.<sup>7</sup>

The first occurrence of other things is often the subject of a tradition. Many myths exist about the origin of fire, and in Irish story the first camp-fire was made by Aidne for the Milesians by wringing his hands together, when flashes as large as apples came from his knuckles, this resembling the legends of light or fire obtained from a saint's hand. At Nemnach, near the *síd* of Tara, rose a stream on which stood the first mill built in Ireland, but no myth describes its origin. On the other hand, the story of the first trap resembles that told of the guillotine and its inventor. Coba was trapper to Erem, son of Mile, and was the first to prepare a trap and pitfall in Erin, but having put his leg into it to test it, his shin-bone and arms were fractured, and he died. Brea, in the time of Partholan, was the first man to build a house or make a cauldron—that important vessel of Celtic myth and ritual;<sup>8</sup>

while the first smelting of gold was the work of Tigernmas, a mythic Irish king.<sup>9</sup> The divine origin of ploughing with oxen has already been mentioned—an interesting agricultural myth.<sup>10</sup> Brigit, goddess of poetry, when her son Ruadan died at Mag-Tured, bewailed him with the first "keening" heard in Ireland; and she also invented a whistle for night signalling.<sup>11</sup> So also the first satire, with dire effects, was spoken by Corpre, poet of the gods.<sup>12</sup> Another instrument, the harp, was discovered accidentally. All was discord in the time of the Firbolgs. Canola fled from her husband and by the shore heard a sweet murmur as the wind played through the sinews still clinging to a whale's skeleton. Listening, she fell asleep; and when her husband, finding her thus, learned that the sound had lulled her, he made a framework of wood for the sinews. On this he played, and the pair were reconciled.<sup>13</sup> But the Irish could also look back to a golden age when, in the reign of Geide the LoudVoiced, each one deemed the other's voice as sweet as strings of lutes would be, because of the greatness of the peace and friendship which every one had for the other;<sup>14</sup> and, with the addition of plenty and prosperity, much the same is said of Conaire's reign, until Midir's vengeance overtook him.<sup>15</sup> Prosperity was supposed to characterize every good king's reign in Ireland, perhaps pointing to earlier belief in his divinity and the dependence of fertility on him; but the result is precisely that which everywhere marked the golden age. As elsewhere, too, gods instituted festivals, one myth telling how Lug first celebrated that of Lughnasad, not in his own honour, but to the glory of his foster-mother.<sup>16</sup>

The mythic trees of Elysium were not unknown on earth, though there they were safely guarded; and another instance, besides those already described,<sup>17</sup> is found in the oak of Mugna. "Berries to berries the Strong Upholder [a god?] put upon it. Three fruits upon it, viz. acorn, apple, and nut; and when the first fruit fell, another used to grow." Leaves were always on this useful tree, which stood until Ninine the poet cast it down.<sup>18</sup> What is perhaps a debased myth of a world-tree like Yggdrasil is found in the story of the tree in Loch Guirr, seen once every seven years as the loch dried

when its enchant- ment left it. A green cloth covered the tree, and a woman sat knitting under it; but once a man stole the cloth, where- upon the woman said:—

"Awake, thou silent tide;  
From the Dead Woman's Land a horseman rides,  
From my head the green cloth snatching."

At these words the waters pursued him and took half of his horse and the cloth from him.<sup>19</sup>

Few and fragmentary as these myths are, they, with the classical myths already cited,<sup>20</sup> prove what a rich cosmogony the ancient Celts must have had.

## References

1. Sébillot [a]; cf. also the same scholar [b].
2. See *supra*, p. 73, and cf. p. 135.
3. For these see the Rennes *Dindſenchas*, ed. and tr. W. Stokes, in *RCel* XV. 429 f., 483 (1894), xvi. 50, 65, 146, 153, 164 (1895).
4. W. Stokes, *ib.* xv. 302 (1894).
5. See MacCulloch [a], pp. 167 ff.
6. Windisch, *Táin*, pp. 869, 886.
7. D'Arbois, *Cours*, v. 10.
8. W. Stokes, in *RCel* xv. 460, 284, xvi. 44, xv. 279 (1894–95).
9. *LL* 16 b.
10. See *supra*, pp. 42, 81.
11. W. Stokes, in *RCel* xii. 95 (1891).
12. W. Stokes, *ib.* p. 71.
13. O. Connellan, in *TOS* v. 96 (i860); S. O'Grady, i. 84.
14. W. Stokes, in *RCel* xv. 279 (1894).
15. See *supra*, p. 75.
16. W. Stokes, in *RCel* xvi. 51 (1895).

[17.](#) See *supra*, pp. 54–55, 87, 131.

[18.](#) W. Stokes, in *RCel* xv. 421 (1894), xvi. 279 (1895).

[19.](#) D. Fitzgerald, *ib.* iv. 185 (1879).

[20.](#) See *supra*, pp. 9–17.



# **The Irish Invasion Myths**

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## **The Celtic Cosmogony**

Among those secret doctrines about the “nature of things” which, as Cæsar tells us, the Druids never would commit to writing, was there anything in the nature of a cosmogony, any account of the origin of the world and of man? There surely was. It would be strange indeed if, alone among the civilizations of the world, the Celts had no world-myth. The spectacle of the universe with all its vast and mysterious phenomena in heaven and on earth has aroused, first the imagination, afterwards the speculative reason, in every people which is capable of either. The Celts had both in abundance, yet, except for that one phrase about the “indestructibility” of the world handed down to us by Strabo, we know nothing of their early imaginings or their reasonings on this subject. Ireland possesses a copious legendary literature. All of this, no doubt, assumed its present form in Christian times; yet so much essential paganism has been allowed to remain in it that it would be strange if Christian influences had led to the excision of everything in these ancient texts that pointed to a non-Christian conception of the origin of things—if Christian editors and transmitters had never given us even the least glimmer of the existence of such a conception. Yet the fact is that they do not give it; there is nothing in the most ancient legendary literature of the Irish Gaels, which is the oldest Celtic literature in existence, corresponding to the Babylonian conquest of Chaos, or the wild Norse myth of the making of Midgard out of the corpse of Ymir, or the Egyptian creation of the universe out of the primeval Water by Thoth, the Word of God, or even to the primitive folklore conceptions found in almost every savage tribe. That the Druids had some doctrine on this subject it is impossible to doubt. But, by resolutely confining it to the initiated and forbidding all lay speculation on the subject, they seem to have completely stifled the mythmaking instinct in regard to questions of cosmogony among

the people at large, and ensured that when their own order perished, their teaching, whatever it was, should die with them.

In the early Irish accounts, therefore, of the beginnings of things, we find that it is not with the World that the narrators make their start—it is simply with their own country, with Ireland. It was the practice, indeed, to prefix to these narratives of early invasions and colonisations the Scriptural account of the making of the world and man, and this shows that something of the kind was felt to be required; but what took the place of the Biblical narrative in pre-Christian days we do not know, and, unfortunately, are now never likely to know.

## **The Cycles of Irish Legend**

Irish mythical and legendary literature, as we have it in the most ancient form, may be said to fall into four main divisions, and to these we shall adhere in our presentation of it in this volume. They are, in chronological order, the Mythological Cycle, or Cycle of the Invasions, the Ultonian or Conorian Cycle, the Ossianic or Fenian Cycle, and a multitude of miscellaneous tales and legends which it is hard to fit into any historical framework.

### **The Mythological Cycle**

The Mythological Cycle comprises the following sections:

1. The coming of Partholan into Ireland.
2. The coming of Nemed into Ireland.
3. The coming of the Firbolgs into Ireland.
4. The invasion of the *Tuatha De Danann*, or People of the god Dana.
5. The invasion of the Milesians (Sons of Miled) from Spain, and their conquest of the People of Dana.

With the Milesians we begin to come into something resembling history—they represent, in Irish legend, the Celtic people; and from them the

ruling families of Ireland are supposed to be descended. The People of Dana are evidently gods. The pre-Danaan settlers or invaders are huge phantom-like figures, which loom vaguely through the mists of tradition, and have little definite characterisation. The accounts which are given of them are many and conflicting, and out of these we can only give here the more ancient narratives.

### **The Coming of Partholan**

The Celts, as we have learned from Caesar, believed themselves to be descended from the God of the Underworld, the God of the Dead. Partholan is said to have come into Ireland from the West, where beyond the vast, unsailed Atlantic Ocean the Irish Fairyland, the Land of the Living—*i.e.*, the land of the Happy Dead— was placed. His father's name was Sera (? the West). He came with his queen Dalny<sup>1</sup> and a number of companions of both sexes. Ireland—and this is an imaginative touch intended to suggest extreme antiquity—was then a different country, physically, from what it is now. There were then but three lakes in Ireland, nine rivers, and only one plain. Others were added gradually during the reign of the Partholans. One, Lake Rury, was said to have burst out as a grave was being dug for Rury, son of Partholan.

### **The Fomorians**

The Partholans, it is said, had to do battle with a strange group, called the Fomorians, of whom we shall hear much in later sections of this book. They were a huge, misshapen, violent and cruel people, representing, we may believe, the powers of evil. One of these was surnamed *Cenchos*, which means The Footless, and thus appears to be related to Vitra, the God of Evil in Vedantic mythology, who had neither feet nor hands. With a host of these demons Partholan fought for the lordship of Ireland, and drove them out to the northern seas, whence they occasionally harried the country under its later rulers.

The end of the peoples of Partholan was that they were afflicted by pestilence, and having gathered together on the Old Plain (Senmag) for convenience of burying their dead, they all perished there; and Ireland once more lay empty for reoccupation.

### **The Legend of Tuan mac Carell**

Who, then, told the tale? This brings us to the mention of a very curious and interesting legend—one of the numerous legendary narratives in which these tales of the Mythical Period have come down to us. It is found in the so-called “Book of the Dun Cow,” a manuscript of about the year A.D. 1100, and is entitled “The Legend of Tuan mac Carell.”

St. Finnen, an Irish abbot of the sixth century, is said to have gone to seek hospitality from a chief named Tuan mac Carell, who dwelt not far from Finnen's monastery at Moville, Co. Donegal. Tuan refused him admittance. The saint sat down on the doorstep of the chief and fasted for a whole Sunday,<sup>2</sup> upon which the surly pagan warrior opened the door to him. Good relations were established between them, and the saint returned to his monks.

“Tuan is an excellent man,” said he to them; “he will come to you and comfort you, and tell you the old stories of Ireland.”<sup>3</sup>

This humane interest in the old myths and legends of the country is, it may here be observed, a feature as constant as it is pleasant in the literature of early Irish Christianity.

Tuan came shortly afterwards to return the visit of the saint, and invited him and his disciples to his fortress. They asked him of his name and lineage, and he gave an astounding reply. “I am a man of Ulster,” he said. “My name is Tuan son of Carell. But once I was called Tuan son of Sarn, son of Sera, and my father, Sarn, was the brother of Partholan.”

“Tell us the history of Ireland,” then said Finnen, and Tuan began. Partholan, he said, was the first of men to settle in Ireland. After the great pestilence already narrated he alone survived, “for there is never a slaughter that one man does not come out of it to tell the tale.” Tuan was alone in the

land, and he wandered about from one vacant fortress to another, from rock to rock, seeking shelter from the wolves. For twenty-two years he lived thus alone, dwelling in waste places, till at last he fell into extreme decrepitude and old age.

“Then Nemed son of Agnoman took possession of Ireland. He (Agnoman) was my father's brother. I saw him from the cliffs, and kept avoiding him. I was long-haired, clawed, decrepit, grey, naked, wretched, miserable. Then one evening I fell asleep, and when I woke again on the morrow I was changed into a stag. I was young again and glad of heart. Then I sang of the coming of Nemed and of his race, and of my own transformation.... ‘I have put on a new form, a skin rough and grey. Victory and joy are easy to me; a little while ago I was weak and defenceless.’”

Tuan is then king of all the deer of Ireland, and so remained all the days of Nemed and his people.

He tells how the Nemedians sailed for Ireland in a fleet of thirty-two barks, in each bark thirty persons. They went astray on the seas for a year and a half, and most of them perished of hunger and thirst or of shipwreck. Nine only escaped—Nemed himself, with four men and four women. These landed in Ireland, and increased their numbers in the course of time till they were 8060 men and women. Then all of them mysteriously died.

Again old age and decrepitude fell upon Tuan, but another transformation awaited him. “Once I was standing at the mouth of my cave—I still remember it—and I knew that my body changed into another form. I was a wild boar. And I sang this song about it:

“ ‘To-day I am a boar.... Time was when I sat in the assembly that gave the judgments of Partholan. It was sung, and all praised the melody. How pleasant was the strain of my brilliant judgment! How pleasant to the comely young

women! My chariot went along in majesty and beauty. My voice was grave and sweet. My step was swift and firm in battle. My face was full of charm. To-day, lo! I am changed into a black boar.'

"That is what I said. Yea, of a surety I was a wild boar. Then I became young again, and I was glad. I was king of the boar-herds in Ireland; and, faithful to any custom, I went the rounds of my abode when I returned into the lands of Ulster, at the times old age and wretchedness came upon me. For it was always there that my transformations took place, and that is why I went back thither to await the renewal of my body."

Tuan then goes on to tell how Semion son of Stariat settled in Ireland, from whom descended the Firbolgs and two other tribes who persisted into historic times. Again old age comes on, his strength fails him, and he undergoes another transformation; he becomes "a great eagle of the sea," and once more rejoices in renewed youth and vigour. He then tells how the People of Dana came in, "gods and false gods from whom every one knows the Irish men of learning are sprung." After these came the Sons of Miled, who conquered the People of Dana. All this time Tuan kept the shape of the sea-eagle, till one day, finding himself about to undergo another transformation, he fasted nine days; "then sleep fell upon me, and I was changed into a salmon." He rejoices in his new life, escaping for many years the snares of the fishermen, till at last he is captured by one of them and brought to the wife of Carell, chief of the country. "The woman desired me and ate me by herself, whole, so that I passed into her womb." He is born again, and passes for Tuan son of Carell; but the memory of his pre-existence and all his transformations and all the history of Ireland that he witnessed since the days of Partholan still abides with him, and he teaches all these things to the Christian monks, who carefully preserve them.

This wild tale, with its atmosphere of grey antiquity and of childlike wonder, reminds us of the transformations of the Welsh Taliessin, who also became an eagle, and points to that doctrine of the transmigration of the soul which, as we have seen, haunted the imagination of the Celt.

We have now to add some details to the sketch of the successive colonisations of Ireland outlined by Tuan mac Carell.

### **The Nemedians**

The Nemedians, as we have seen, were akin to the Partholarians. Both of them came from the mysterious regions of the dead, though later Irish accounts, which endeavoured to reconcile this mythical matter with Christianity, invented for them a descent from Scriptural patriarchs and an origin in earthly lands such as Spain or Scythia. Both of them had to do constant battle with the Fomorians, whom the later legends make out to be pirates from overseas, but who are doubtless divinities representing the powers of darkness and evil. There is no legend of the Fomorians coming into Ireland, nor were they regarded as at any time a regular portion of the population. They were coeval with the world itself. Nemed fought victoriously against them in four great battles, but shortly afterwards died of a plague which carried off 2000 of his people with him. The Fomorians were then enabled to establish their tyranny over Ireland. They had at this period two kings, Morc and Conann. The stronghold of the Formorian power was on Tory Island, which uplifts its wild cliffs and precipices in the Atlantic off the coast of Donegal—a fit home for these people of mystery and horror. They extracted a crushing tribute from the people of Ireland, two-thirds of all the milk and two-thirds of the children of the land. At last the Nemedians rise in revolt. Led by three chiefs, they land on Tory Island, capture Conann's Tower, and Conann himself falls by the hand of the Nemedian chief, Fergus. But Morc at this moment comes into the battle with a fresh host, and utterly routs the Nemedians, who are all slain but thirty:

“The men of Erin were all at the battle,  
After the Fomorians came;  
All of them the sea engulfed,  
Save only three times ten.”

*Poem by Eochy O'Flann, circ. A.D. 960.*

The thirty survivors leave Ireland in despair. According to the most ancient belief they perished utterly, leaving no descendants, but later accounts, which endeavour to make sober history out of all these myths, represent one family, that of the chief Britan, as settling in Great Britain and giving their name to that country, while two others returned to Ireland, after many wanderings, as the Firbolgs and People of Dana.

### **The Coming of the Firbolgs**

Who were the Firbolgs, and what did they represent in Irish legend? The name appears to mean “Men of the Bags,” and a legend was in later times invented to account for it. It was said that after settling in Greece they were oppressed by the people of that country, who set them to carry earth from the fertile valleys up to the rocky hills, so as to make arable ground of the latter. They did their task by means of leathern bags; but at last, growing weary of the oppression, they made boats or coracles out of their bags, and set sail in them for Ireland. Nennius, however, says they came from Spain, for according to him all the various ethnic groups that inhabited Ireland came originally from Spain; and “Spain” with him is a rationalistic rendering of the Celtic words designating the Land of the Dead.<sup>4</sup> They came in three groups, the Fir-Bolg, the Fir-Domnan, and the Galioin, who are all generally designated as Firbolgs. They play no great part in Irish mythical history, and a certain character of servility and inferiority appears to attach to them throughout.

One of their kings, Eochy<sup>5</sup> mac Erc, took in marriage Taltiu, or Telta, daughter of the King of the “Great Plain” (the Land of the Dead). Telta had a palace at the place now called after her, Telltown (properly Teltin). There she died, and there, even in mediæval Ireland, a great annual assembly or fair was held in her honour.

### **The Coming of the People of Dana**



We now come to by far the most interesting and important of the mythical invaders and colonisers of Ireland, the People of Dana. The name, *Tuatha De Danann*, means literally “the folk of the god whose mother is Dana.” Dana also sometimes bears another name, that of Brigit, a goddess held in much honour by pagan Ireland, whose attributes are in a great measure transferred in legend to the Christian St. Brigit of the sixth century. Her name is also found in Gaulish inscriptions as “Brigindo,” and occurs in several British inscriptions as “Brigantia.” She was the daughter of the supreme head of the People of Dana, the god Dagda, “The Good.” She had three sons, who are said to have had in common one only son, named Ecne—that is to say, “Knowledge,” or “Poetry.”<sup>6</sup> Ecne, then, may be said to be the god whose mother was Dana, and the ethnic group to whom she gave her name are the clearest representatives we have in Irish myths of the powers of Light and Knowledge. It will be remembered that alone among all these mythical people Tuan mac Carell gave to the People of Dana the name of “gods.” Yet it is not as gods that they appear in the form in which Irish legends about them have now come down to us. Christian influences reduced them to the rank of fairies or identified them with the fallen angels. They were conquered by the Milesians, who are conceived as an entirely human race, and who had all sorts of relations of love and war with them until quite recent times. Yet even in the later legends a certain splendour and exaltation appears to invest the People of Dana, recalling the high estate from which they had been dethroned.

### **The Popular and the Bardic Conceptions**

Nor must it be overlooked that the popular conception of the Danaan deities was probably at all times something different from the bardic and Druidic, or in other words the scholarly, conception. The latter, as we shall see, represents them as the presiding deities of science and poetry. This is not a popular idea; it is the product of the Celtic, the Aryan imagination, inspired by a strictly intellectual conception. The common people, who represented mainly the Megalithic element in the population, appear to have conceived

their deities as earth-powers—*dei terreni*, as they are explicitly called in the eighth-century “Book of Armagh”<sup>7</sup>—presiding, not over science and poetry, but rather agriculture, controlling the fecundity of the earth and water, and dwelling in hills, rivers, and lakes. In the bardic literature the Aryan idea is prominent; the other is to be found in innumerable folk-tales and popular observances; but of course in each case a considerable amount of interpenetration of the two conceptions is to be met with—no sharp dividing line was drawn between them in ancient times, and none can be drawn now.

### **The Treasures of the Danaans**

Tuan mac Carell says they came to Ireland “out of heaven.” This is embroidered in later tradition into a narrative telling how they sprang from four great cities, whose very names breathe of fairydom and romance—Falias, Gorias, Finias, and Murias. Here they learned science and craftsmanship from great sages one of whom was enthroned in each city, and from each they brought with them a magical treasure. From Falias came the stone called the *Lia Fail*, or Stone of Destiny, on which the High-Kings of Ireland stood when they were crowned, and which was supposed to confirm the election of a rightful monarch by roaring under him as he took his place on it. The actual stone which was so used at the inauguration of a reign did from immemorial times exist at Tara, and was sent thence to Scotland early in the sixth century for the crowning of Fergus the Great, son of Erc, who begged his brother Murtagh mac Erc, King of Ireland, for the loan of it. An ancient prophecy told that wherever this stone was, a king of the Scotie (*i.e.*, Irish-Milesian) people should reign. This is the famous Stone of Scone, which never came back to Ireland, but was removed to England by Edward I. in 1297, and is now the Coronation Stone in Westminster Abbey. Nor has the old prophecy been falsified, since through the Stuarts and Fergus mac Erc the descent of the British royal family can be traced from the historic kings of Milesian Ireland.

The second treasure of the Danaans was the invincible sword of Lugh of the Long Arm, of whom we shall hear later, and this sword came from the city of Gorias. From Finias came a magic spear, and from Murias the Cauldron of the Dagda, a vessel which had the property that it could feed a host of men without ever being emptied.

With these possessions, according to the version given in the “Book of Invasions,” the People of Dana came into Ireland.

### **The Danaans and the Firbolgs**

They were wafted into the land in a magic cloud, making their first appearance in Western Connacht. When the cloud cleared away, the Firbolgs discovered them in a camp which they had already fortified at Moyrein.

The Firbolgs now sent out one of their warriors, named Sreng, to interview the mysterious new-comers; and the People of Dana, on their side, sent a warrior named Bres to represent them. The two ambassadors examined each other's weapons with great interest. The spears of the Danaans, we are told, were light and sharp-pointed; those of the Firbolgs were heavy and blunt. To contrast the power of science with that of brute force is here the evident intention of the legend, and we are reminded of the Greek myth of the struggle of the Olympian deities with the Titans.

Bres proposed to the Firbolg that the two ethnic groups should divide Ireland equally between them, and join to defend it against all comers for the future. They then exchanged weapons and returned each to his own camp.

### **The First Battle of Moytura**

The Firbolgs, however, were not impressed with the superiority of the Danaans, and decided to refuse their offer. The battle was joined on the Plain of Moytura,<sup>8</sup> in the south of Co. Mayo, near the spot now called Cong. The Firbolgs were led by their king, mac Erc, and the Danaans by

Nuada of the Silver Hand, who got his name from an incident in this battle. His hand, it is said, was cut off in the fight, and one of the skilful artificers who abounded in the ranks of the Danaans made him a new one of silver. By their magical and healing arts the Danaans gained the victory, and the Firbolg king was slain. But a reasonable agreement followed: the Firbolgs were allotted the province of Connacht for their territory, while the Danaans took the rest of Ireland. So late as the seventeenth century the annalist Mac Firbis discovered that many of the inhabitants of Connacht traced their descent to these same Firbolgs. Probably they were a veritable historic ethnicity, and the conflict between them and the People of Dana may be a piece of actual history invested with some of the features of a myth.

### **The Expulsion of King Bres**

Nuada of the Silver Hand should now have been ruler of the Danaans, but his mutilation forbade it, for no blemished man might be a king in Ireland. The Danaans therefore chose Bres, who was the son of a Danaan woman named Eri, but whose father was unknown, to reign over them instead. This was another Bres, not the envoy who had treated with the Firbolgs and who was slain in the battle of Moytura. Now Bres, although strong and beautiful to look on, had no gift of kingship, for he not only allowed the enemy of Ireland, the Fomorians, to renew their oppression and taxation in the land, but he himself taxed his subjects heavily too; and was so niggardly that he gave no hospitality to chiefs and nobles and harpers. Lack of generosity and hospitality was always reckoned the worst of vices in an Irish prince. One day it is said that there came to his court the poet Corpry, who found himself housed in a small, dark chamber without fire or furniture, where, after long delay, he was served with three dry cakes and no ale. In revenge he composed a satirical quatrain on his churlish host:

“Without food quickly served,  
Without a cow's milk, whereon a calf can grow,  
Without a dwelling fit for a man under the gloomy night,

Without means to entertain a bardic company,—  
Let such be the condition of Bres.”

Poetic satire in Ireland was supposed to have a kind of magical power. Kings dreaded it; even rats could be exterminated by it.<sup>9</sup> This quatrain of Corpry's was repeated with delight among the people, and Bres had to lay down his sovranty. This was said to be the first satire ever made in Ireland. Meantime, because Nuada had got his silver hand through the art of his physician Diancecht, or because, as some versions of the legend say, a still greater healer, the son of Diancecht, had made the veritable hand grow again to the stump, he was chosen to be king in place of Bres.

The latter now betook himself in wrath and resentment to his mother Eri, and begged her to give him counsel and to tell him of his lineage. Eri then declared to him that his father was Elatha, a king of the Fomorians, who had come to her secretly from over sea, and when he departed had given her a ring, bidding her never bestow it on any man save him whose finger it would fit. She now brought forth the ring, and it fitted the finger of Bres, who went down with her to the strand where the Fomorian lover had landed, and they sailed together for his father's home.

### **The Tyranny of the Fomorians**

Elatha recognised the ring, and gave his son an army wherewith to reconquer Ireland, and also sent him to seek further aid from the greatest of the Fomorian kings, Balor. Now Balor was surnamed “of the Evil Eye,” because the gaze of his one eye could slay like a thunderbolt those on whom he looked in anger. He was now, however, so old and feeble that the vast eyelid drooped over the death-dealing eye, and had to be lifted up by his men with ropes and pulleys when the time came to turn it on his foes. Nuada could make no more head against him than Bres had done when king; and the country still groaned under the oppression of the Fomorians and longed for a champion and redeemer.

## The Coming of Lugh

A new figure now comes into the myth, no other than Lugh son of Kian, the Sun-god *par excellence* of all Celtica, whose name we can still identify in many historic sites on the Continent.<sup>10</sup> To explain his appearance we must desert for a moment the ancient manuscript authorities, which are here incomplete, and have to be supplemented by a folk-tale which was fortunately discovered and taken down orally so late as the nineteenth century by the great Irish antiquary, O'Donovan.<sup>11</sup> In this folk-tale the names of Balor and his daughter Ethlinn (the latter in the form "Ethnea") are preserved, as well as those of some other mythical personages, but that of the father of Lugh is faintly echoed in MacKineely; Lugh's own name is forgotten, and the death of Balor is given in a manner inconsistent with the ancient myth. In the story as I give it here the antique names and mythical outline are preserved, but are supplemented where required from the folk-tale, omitting from the latter those modern features which are not reconcilable with the myth.

The story, then, goes that Balor, the Fomorian king, heard in a Druidic prophecy that he would be slain by his grandson. His only child was an infant daughter named Ethlinn. To avert the doom he, like Acrisios, father of Danae, in the Greek myth, had her imprisoned in a high tower which he caused to be built on a precipitous headland, the Tor Mōr, in Tory Island. He placed the girl in charge of twelve matrons, who were strictly charged to prevent her from ever seeing the face of man, or even learning that there were any beings of a different sex from her own. In this seclusion Ethlinn grew up—as all sequestered princesses do—into a maiden of surpassing beauty.

Now it happened that there were on the mainland three brothers, namely, Kian, Sawan, and Goban the Smith, the great armourer and artificer of Irish myth, who corresponds to Wayland Smith in Germanic legend. Kian had a magical cow, whose milk was so abundant that every one longed to possess her, and he had to keep her strictly under protection.

Balor determined to possess himself of this cow. One day Kian and Sawan had come to the forge to have some weapons made for them, bringing fine steel for that purpose. Kian went into the forge, leaving Sawan in charge of the cow. Balor now appeared on the scene, taking on himself the form of a little redheaded boy, and told Sawan that he had overheard the brothers inside the forge concocting a plan for using all the fine steel for their own swords, leaving but common metal for that of Sawan. The latter, in a great rage, gave the cow's halter to the boy and rushed into the forge to put a stop to this nefarious scheme. Balor immediately carried off the cow, and dragged her across the sea to Tory Island.

Kian now determined to avenge himself on Balor, and to this end sought the advice of a Druidess named Birōg. Dressing himself in woman's garb, he was wafted by magical spells across the sea, where Birōg, who accompanied him, represented to Ethlinn's guardians that they were two noble ladies cast upon the shore in escaping from an abductor, and begged for shelter. They were admitted; Kian found means to have access to the Princess Ethlinn while the matrons were laid by Birōg under the spell of an enchanted slumber, and when they awoke Kian and the Druidess had vanished as they came. But Ethlinn had given Kian her love, and soon her guardians found that she was with child. Fearing Balor's wrath, the matrons persuaded her that the whole transaction was but a dream, and said nothing about it; but in due time Ethlinn was delivered of three sons at a birth.

News of this event came to Balor, and in anger and fear he commanded the three infants to be drowned in a whirlpool off the Irish coast. The messenger who was charged with this command rolled up the children in a sheet, but in carrying them to the appointed place the pin of the sheet came loose, and one of the children dropped out and fell into a little bay, called to this day *Port na Delig*, or the Haven of the Pin. The other two were duly drowned, and the servant reported his mission accomplished.

But the child who had fallen into the bay was guarded by the Druidess, who wafted it to the home of its father, Kian, and Kian gave it in fosterage to his brother the smith, who taught the child his own trade and made it skilled in every manner of craft and handiwork. This child was Lugh. When

he was grown to a youth the Danaans placed him in charge of Duach, "The Dark," king of the Great Plain (Fairylane, or the "Land of the Living," which is also the Land of the Dead), and here he dwelt till he reached manhood.

Lugh was, of course, the appointed redeemer of the Danaan people from their servitude. His coming is narrated in a story which brings out the solar attributes of universal power, and shows him, like Apollo, as the presiding deity of all human knowledge and of all artistic and medicinal skill. He came, it is told, to take service with Nuada of the Silver Hand, and when the doorkeeper at the royal palace of Tara asked him what he could do, he answered that he was a carpenter.

"We are in no need of a carpenter," said the doorkeeper; "we have an excellent one in Luchta son of Luchad." "I am a smith too," said Lugh. "We have a master-smith," said the doorkeeper, "already." "Then I am a warrior," said Lugh. "We do not need one," said the doorkeeper, "while we have Ogma." Lugh goes on to name all the occupations and arts he can think of—he is a poet, a harper, a man of science, a physician, a spencer, and so forth, always receiving the answer that a man of supreme accomplishment in that art is already installed at the court of Nuada. "Then ask the King," said Lugh, "if he has in his service any one man who is accomplished in every one of these arts, and if he have, I shall stay here no longer, nor seek to enter his palace." Upon this Lugh is received, and the surname Ildánach is conferred upon him, meaning "The All-Craftsman," Prince of all the Sciences; while another name that he commonly bore was Lugh Lamfada, or Lugh of the Long Arm. We are reminded here, as de Jubainville points out, of the Gaulish god whom Caesar identifies with Mercury, "inventor of all the arts," and to whom the Gauls put up many statues. The Irish myth supplements this information and tells us the Celtic name of this deity.

When Lugh came from the Land of the Living he brought with him many magical gifts. There was the Boat of Mananan, son of Lir the Sea God, which knew a man's thoughts and would travel whithersoever he would, and the Horse of Mananan, that could go alike over land and sea,



and a terrible sword named *Fragarach* ("The Answerer"), that could cut through any mail. So equipped, he appeared one day before an assembly of the Danaan chiefs who were met to pay their tribute to the envoys of the Fomorian oppressors; and when the Danaans saw him, they felt, it is said, as if they beheld the rising of the sun on a dry summer's day. Instead of paying the tribute, they, under Lugh's leadership, attacked the Fomorians, all of whom were slain but nine men, and these were sent back to tell Balor that the Danaans defied him and would pay no tribute henceforward. Balor then made him ready for battle, and bade his captains, when they had subdued the Danaans, make fast the island by cables to their ships and tow it far northward to the Fomorian regions of ice and gloom, where it would trouble them no longer.

### **The Quest of the Sons of Turenn**

Lugh, on his side, also prepared for the final combat; but to ensure victory certain magical instruments were still needed for him, and these had now to be obtained. The story of the quest of these objects, which incidentally tells us also of the end of Lugh's father, Kian, is one of the most valuable and curious in Irish legend, and formed one of a triad of mythical tales which were reckoned as the flower of Irish romance.<sup>12</sup>

Kian, the story goes, was sent northward by Lugh to summon the fighting men of the Danaans in Ulster to the hosting against the Fomorians. On his way, as he crosses the Plain of Murthemney, near Dundalk, he meets with three brothers, Brian, Iuchar, and Iucharba, sons of Turenn, between whose house and that of Kian there was a blood-feud. He seeks to avoid them by changing into the form of a pig and joining a herd which is rooting in the plain, but the brothers detect him and Brian wounds him with a cast from a spear. Kian, knowing that his end is come, begs to be allowed to change back into human form before he is slain. "I had liefer kill a man than a pig," says Brian, who takes throughout the leading part in all the brothers' adventures. Kian then stands before them as a man, with the blood from Brian's spear trickling from his breast. "I have outwitted ye," he cries,

“for if ye had slain a pig ye would have paid but the eric (blood-fine) of a pig, but now ye shall pay the eric of a man; never was greater eric than that which ye shall pay; and the weapons ye slay me with shall tell the tale to the avenger of blood.”

“Then you shall be slain with no weapons at all,” says Brian, and he and the brothers stone him to death and bury him in the ground as deep as the height of a man.

But when Lugh shortly afterwards passes that way the stones on the plain cry out and tell him of his father's murder at the hands of the sons of Turenn. He uncovers the body, and, vowing vengeance, returns to Tara. Here he accuses the sons of Turenn before the High King, and is permitted to have them executed, or to name the eric he will accept in remission of that sentence. Lugh chooses to have the eric, and he names it as follows, concealing things of vast price, and involving unheard-of toils, under the names of common objects: Three apples, the skin of a pig, a spear, a chariot with two horses, seven swine, a hound, a cooking-spit, and, finally, to give three shouts on a hill. The brothers bind themselves to pay the fine, and Lugh then declares the meaning of it. The three apples are those which grow in the Garden of the Sun; the pig-skin is a magical skin which heals every wound and sickness if it can be laid on the sufferer, and it is a possession of the King of Greece; the spear is a magical weapon owned by the King of Persia (these names, of course, are mere fanciful appellations for places in the mysterious world of Faëry); the seven swine belong to King Asal of the Golden Pillars, and may be killed and eaten every night and yet be found whole next day; the spit belongs to the sea-nymphs of the sunken Island of Finchory; and the three shouts are to be given on the hill of a fierce warrior, Mochaen, who, with his sons, are under vows to prevent any man from raising his voice on that hill. To fulfil any one of these enterprises would be an all but impossible task, and the brothers must accomplish them all before they can clear themselves of the guilt and penalty of Kian's death.

The story then goes on to tell how with infinite daring and resource the sons of Turenn accomplish one by one all their tasks, but when all are done

save the capture of the cooking-spit and the three shouts on the Hill of Mochaen, Lugh, by magical arts, causes forgetfulness to fall upon them, and they return to Ireland with their treasures. These, especially the spear and the pig-skin, are just what Lugh needs to help him against the Fomorians; but his vengeance is not complete, and after receiving the treasures he reminds the brothers of what is yet to be won. They, in deep dejection, now begin to understand how they are played with, and go forth sadly to win, if they can, the rest of the éric. After long wandering they discover that the Island of Finchory is not above, but under the sea. Brian in a magical “water-dress” goes down to it, sees the thrice fifty nymphs in their palace, and seizes the golden spit from their hearth. The ordeal of the Hill of Mochaen is the last to be attempted. After a desperate combat which ends in the slaying of Mochaen and his sons, the brothers, mortally wounded, uplift their voices in three faint cries, and so the éric is fulfilled. The life is still in them, however, when they return to Ireland, and their aged father, Turenn, implores Lugh for the loan of the magic pig-skin to heal them; but the implacable Lugh refuses, and the brothers and their father die together. So ends the tale.

### **The Second Battle of Moytura**

The Second Battle of Moytura took place on a plain in the north of Co. Sligo, which is remarkable for the number of sepulchral monuments still scattered over it. The first battle, of course, was that which the Danaans had waged with the Firbolgs, and the Moytura there referred to was much further south, in Co. Mayo. The battle with the Fomorians is related with an astounding wealth of marvellous incident. The craftsmen of the Danaans, Goban the smith, Credné the artificer (or goldsmith), and Luchta the carpenter, keep repairing the broken weapons of the Danaans with magical speed—three blows of Goban's hammer make a spear or sword, Luchta flings a handle at it and it sticks on at once, and Credné jerks the rivets at it with his tongs as fast as he makes them and they fly into their places. The

wounded are healed by the magical pig-skin. The plain resounds with the clamour of battle:

“Fearful indeed was the thunder which rolled over the battlefield; the shouts of the warriors, the breaking of the shields, the flashing and clashing of the swords, of the straight, ivory-hilted swords, the music and harmony of the ‘belly-darts’ and the sighing and winging of the spears and lances.”<sup>13</sup>

### **The Death of Balor**

The Fomorians bring on their champion, Balor, before the glance of whose terrible eye Nuada of the Silver Hand and others of the Danaans go down. But Lugh, seizing an opportunity when the eyelid drooped through weariness, approached close to Balor, and as it began to lift once more he hurled into the eye a great stone which sank into the brain, and Balor lay dead, as the prophecy had foretold, at the hand of his grandson. The Fomorians were then totally routed, and it is not recorded that they ever again gained any authority or committed any extensive depredations in Ireland. Lugh, the Ildánach, was then enthroned in place of Nuada, and the myth of the victory of the solar hero over the powers of darkness and brute force is complete.

### **The Harp of the Dagda**

A curious little incident bearing on the power which the Danaans could exercise by the spell of music may here be inserted. The flying Fomorians, it is told, had made prisoner the harper of the Dagda and carried him off with them. Lugh, the Dagda, and the warrior Ogma followed them, and came unknown into the banqueting-hall of the Fomorian camp. There they saw the harp hanging on the wall. The Dagda called to it, and immediately it flew into his hands, killing nine men of the Fomorians on its way. The Dagda's invocation of the harp is very singular, and not a little puzzling:

“Come, apple-sweet murmurer,” he cries, “come, four-angled frame of harmony, come, Summer, come, Winter, from the mouths of harps and bags and pipes.”<sup>14</sup>

The allusion to summer and winter suggests the practice in Indian music of allotting certain musical modes to the different seasons of the year (and even to different times of day), and also an Egyptian legend referred to in Burney's “History of Music,” where the three strings of the lyre were supposed to answer respectively to the three seasons, spring, summer, and winter.<sup>15</sup>

When the Dagda got possession of the harp, the tale goes on, he played on it the “three noble strains” which every great master of the harp should command, namely, the Strain of Lament, which caused the hearers to weep, the Strain of Laughter, which made them merry, and the Strain of Slumber, or Lullaby, which plunged them all in a profound sleep. And under cover of that sleep the Danaan champion stole out and escaped. It may be observed that throughout the whole of the legendary literature of Ireland skill in music, the art whose influence most resembles that of a mysterious spell or gift of Faëry, is the prerogative of the People of Dana and their descendants. Thus in the “Colloquy of the Ancients,” a collection of tales made about the thirteenth or fourteenth century, St. Patrick is introduced to a minstrel, Cascorach, “a handsome, curly-headed, dark-browed youth,” who plays so sweet a strain that the saint and his retinue all fall asleep. Cascorach, we are told, was son of a minstrel of the Danaan folk. St. Patrick's scribe, Brogan, remarks, “A good cast of thine art is that thou gavest us.” “Good indeed it were,” said Patrick, “but for a twang of the fairy spell that infests it; barring which nothing could more nearly resemble heaven's harmony.”<sup>16</sup> Some of the most beautiful of the antique Irish folk-melodies,—*e.g.*, the *Coulin*—are traditionally supposed to have been overheard by mortal harpers at the revels of the Fairy Folk.

## **Names and Characteristics of the Danaan Deities**

I may conclude this narrative of the Danaan conquest with some account of the principal Danaan gods and their attributes, which will be useful to readers of the subsequent pages. The best with which I am acquainted is to be found in Mr. Standish O'Grady's "Critical History of Ireland."<sup>17</sup> This work is no less remarkable for its critical insight—it was published in 1881, when scientific study of the Celtic mythology was little heard of—than for the true bardic imagination, kindred to that of the ancient myth-makers themselves, which recreates the dead forms of the past and dilates them with the breath of life. The broad outlines in which Mr. O'Grady has laid down the typical characteristics of the chief personages in the Danaan cycle hardly need any correction at this day, and have been of much use to me in the following summary of the subject.

## **The Dagda**

The Dagda Mōr was the father and chief of the People of Dana. A certain conception of vastness attaches to him and to his doings. In the Second Battle of Moytura his blows sweep down whole ranks of the enemy, and his spear, when he trails it on the march, draws a furrow in the ground like the fosse which marks the mearing of a province. An element of grotesque humour is present in some of the records about this deity. When the Fomorians give him food on his visit to their camp, the porridge and milk are poured into a great pit in the ground, and he eats it with a spoon big enough, it was said, for a man and a woman to lie together in it. With this spoon he scrapes the pit, when the porridge is done, and shovels earth and gravel unconcernedly down his throat. We have already seen that, like all the Danaans, he is a master of music, as well as of other magical endowments, and owns a harp which comes flying through the air at his call. "The tendency to attribute life to inanimate things is apparent in the Homeric literature, but exercises a very great influence in the mythology of this country. The living, fiery spear of Lugh; the magic ship of Mananan; the sword of Conary Mōr, which sang; Cuchulain's sword, which spoke; the Lia Fail, Stone of Destiny, which roared for joy beneath the feet of rightful

kings; the waves of the ocean, roaring with rage and sorrow when such kings are in jeopardy; the waters of the Avon Dia, holding back for fear at the mighty duel between Cuchulain and Ferdia, are but a few out of many examples.”<sup>18</sup> A legend of later times tells how once, at the death of a great scholar, all the books in Ireland fell from their shelves upon the floor.

## Angus Ōg

Angus Ōg (Angus the Young), son of the Dagda, by Boanna (the river Boyne), was the Irish god of love. His palace was supposed to be at New Grange, on the Boyne. Four bright birds that ever hovered about his head were supposed to be his kisses taking shape in this lovely form, and at their singing love came springing up in the hearts of youths and maidens. Once he fell sick of love for a maiden whom he had seen in a dream. He told the cause of his sickness to his mother Boanna, who searched all Ireland for the girl, but could not find her. Then the Dagda was called in, but he too was at a loss, till he called to his aid Bōv the Red, king of the Danaans of Munster—the same whom we have met with in the tale of the Children of Lir, and who was skilled in all mysteries and enchantments. Bōv undertook the search, and after a year had gone by declared that he had found the visionary maiden at a lake called the Lake of the Dragon's Mouth.

Angus goes to Bōv, and, after being entertained by him three days, is brought to the lake shore, where he sees thrice fifty maidens walking in couples, each couple linked by a chain of gold, but one of them is taller than the rest by a head and shoulders. “That is she!” cries Angus. “Tell us by what name she is known.” Bōv answers that her name is Caer, daughter of Ethal Anubal, a prince of the Danaans of Connacht. Angus laments that he is not strong enough to carry her off from her companions, but, on Bōv's advice, betakes himself to Ailell and Maev, the mortal King and Queen of Connacht, for assistance. The Dagda and Angus then both repair to the palace of Ailell, who feasts them for a week, and then asks the cause of their coming. When it is declared he answers, “We have no authority over Ethal Anubal.” They send a message to him, however, asking for the hand

of Caer for Angus, but Ethal refuses to give her up. In the end he is besieged by the combined forces of Ailell and the Dagda, and taken prisoner. When Caer is again demanded of him he declares that he cannot comply, “for she is more powerful than I.” He explains that she lives alternately in the form of a maiden and of a swan year and year about, “and on the first of November next,” he says, “you will see her with a hundred and fifty other swans at the Lake of the Dragon's Mouth.”

Angus goes there at the appointed time, and cries to her, “Oh, come and speak to me!” “Who calls me?” asks Caer. Angus explains who he is, and then finds himself transformed into a swan. This is an indication of consent, and he plunges in to join his love in the lake. After that they fly together to the palace on the Boyne, uttering as they go a music so divine that all hearers are lulled to sleep for three days and nights.

Angus is the special deity and friend of beautiful youths and maidens. Dermot of the Love-spot, a follower of Finn mac Cumhal, and lover of Grania, of whom we shall hear later, was bred up with Angus in the palace on the Boyne. He was the typical lover of Irish legend. When he was slain by the wild boar of Ben Bulbin, Angus revives him and carries him off to share his immortality in his fairy palace.

### **Len of Killarney**

Of Bōv the Red, brother of the Dagda, we have already heard. He had, it is said, a goldsmith named Len, who “gave their ancient name to the Lakes of Killarney, once known as Locha Lein, the Lakes of Len of the Many Hammers. Here by the lake he wrought, surrounded by rainbows and showers of fiery dew.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Lugh**

Lugh has already been described.<sup>20</sup> He has more distinctly solar attributes than any other Celtic deity; and, as we know, his worship was spread widely over Continental Celtica. In the tale of the Quest of the Sons of Turenn we



are told that Lugh approached the Fomorians from the west. Then Bres, son of Balor, arose and said: "I wonder that the sun is rising in the west to-day, and in the east every other day." "Would it were so," said his Druids. "Why, what else but the sun is it?" said Bres. "It is the radiance of the face of Lugh of the Long Arm," they replied.

Lugh was the father, by the Milesian maiden Dectera, of Cuchulain, the most heroic figure in Irish legend, in whose story there is evidently a strong element of the solar myth.<sup>21</sup>

### **Midir the Proud**

Midir the Proud is a son of the Dagda. His fairy palace is at *Bri Leith*, or Slieve Callary, in Co. Longford. He frequently appears in legends dealing partly with human, partly with Danaan personages, and is always represented as a type of splendour in his apparel and in personal beauty. When he appears to King Eochy on the Hill of Tara he is thus described:<sup>22</sup>

"It chanced that Eochaid Airemm, the King of Tara, arose upon a certain fair day in the time of summer; and he ascended the high ground of Tara<sup>23</sup> to behold the plain of Breg; beautiful was the colour of that plain, and there was upon it excellent blossom glowing with all hues that are known. And as the aforesaid Eochy looked about and around him, he saw a young strange warrior upon the high ground at his side. The tunic that the warrior wore was purple in colour, his hair was of a golden yellow, and of such length that it reached to the edge of his shoulders. The eyes of the young warrior were lustrous and grey; in the one hand he held a fine pointed spear, in the other a shield with a white central boss, and with gems of gold upon it. And Eochaid held his peace, for he knew that none such had been in Tara on the night before, and the gate that led into the *Liss* had not at that time been thrown open."<sup>24</sup>

## **Lir and Mananan**

Lir, as Mr. O'Grady remarks, "appears in two distinct forms. In the first he is a vast, impersonal presence commensurate with the sea; in fact, the Greek Oceanus. In the second, he is a separate person dwelling invisibly on Slieve Fuad," in Co. Armagh. We hear little of him in Irish legend, where the attributes of the sea-god are mostly conferred on his son, Mananan.

This deity is one of the most popular in Irish mythology. He was lord of the sea, beyond or under which the Land of Youth or Islands of the Dead were supposed to lie; he therefore was the guide of man to this country. He was master of tricks and illusions, and owned all kinds of magical possessions—the boat named Ocean-sweeper, which obeyed the thought of those who sailed in it and went without oar or sail, the steed Aonbarr, which could travel alike on sea or land, and the sword named The Answerer, which no armour could resist. White-crested waves were called the Horses of Mananan, and it was forbidden (*tabu*) for the solar hero, Cuchulain, to perceive them—this indicated the daily death of the sun at his setting in the western waves. Mananan wore a great cloak which was capable of taking on every kind of colour, like the widespread field of the sea as looked on from a height; and as the protector of the island of Erin it was said that when any hostile force invaded it they heard his thunderous tramp and the flapping of his mighty cloak as he marched angrily round and round their camp at night. The Isle of Man, seen dimly from the Irish coast, was supposed to be the throne of Mananan, and to take its name from this deity.

## **The Goddess Dana**

The greatest of the Danaan goddesses was Dana, "mother of the Irish gods," as she is called in an early text. She was daughter of the Dagda, and, like him, associated with ideas of fertility and blessing. According to d'Arbois de Jubainville, she was identical with the goddess Brigit, who was so widely worshipped in Celtica. Brian, Iuchar, and Iucharba are said to have been her sons—these really represent but one person, in the usual Irish

fashion of conceiving the divine power in triads. The name of Brian, who takes the lead in all the exploits of the brethren,<sup>25</sup> is a derivation from a more ancient form, Brenos, and under this form was the god to whom the Celts attributed their victories at the Allia and at Delphi, mistaken by Roman and Greek chroniclers for an earthly leader.

### **The Morrigan**

There was also an extraordinary goddess named the Morrigan,<sup>26</sup> who appears to embody all that is perverse and horrible among supernatural powers. She delighted in setting men at war, and fought among them herself, changing into many frightful shapes and often hovering above fighting armies in the aspect of a crow. She met Cuchulain once and proffered him her love in the guise of a human maid. He refused it, and she persecuted him thenceforward for the most of his life. Warring with him once in the middle of the stream, she turned herself into a water-serpent, and then into a mass of water-weeds, seeking to entangle and drown him. But he conquered and wounded her, and she afterwards became his friend. Before his last battle she passed through Emain Macha at night, and broke the pole of his chariot as a warning.

### **Cleena's Wave**

One of the most notable landmarks of Ireland was the *Tonn Cliodhna*, or "Wave of Cleena," on the seashore at Glandore Bay, in Co. Cork. The story about Cleena exists in several versions, which do not agree with each other except in so far as she seems to have been a Danaan maiden once living in Mananan's country, the Land of Youth beyond the sea. Escaping thence with a mortal lover, as one of the versions tells, she landed on the southern coast of Ireland, and her lover, Keewan of the Curling Locks, went off to hunt in the woods. Cleena, who remained on the beach, was lulled to sleep by fairy music played by a minstrel of Mananan, when a great wave of the sea swept

up and carried her back to Fairyland, leaving her lover desolate. Hence the place was called the Strand of Cleena's Wave.

### **The Goddess Ainé**

Another topical goddess was Ainé, the patroness of Munster, who is still venerated by the people of that county. She was the daughter of the Danaan Owel, a foster-son of Mananan and a Druid. She is in some sort a love-goddess, continually inspiring mortals with passion. She was ravished, it was said, by Ailill Olum, King of Munster, who was slain in consequence by her magic arts, and the story is repeated in far later times about another mortal lover, who was not, however, slain, a Fitzgerald, to whom she bore the famous wizard Earl.<sup>27</sup> Many of the aristocratic families of Munster claimed descent from this union. Her name still clings to the "Hill of Ainé" (Knockainey), near Loch Gur, in Munster. All the Danaan deities in the popular imagination were earth-gods, *dei terreni*, associated with ideas of fertility and increase. Ainé is not heard much of in the bardic literature, but she is very prominent in the folk-lore of the neighbourhood. At the bidding of her son, Earl Gerald, she planted all Knockainey with pease in a single night. She was, and perhaps still is, worshipped on Midsummer Eve by the peasantry, who carried torches of hay and straw, tied on poles and lighted, round her hill at night. Afterwards they dispersed themselves among their cultivated fields and pastures, waving the torches over the crops and the cattle to bring luck and increase for the following year. On one night, as told by Mr. D. Fitzgerald,<sup>28</sup> who has collected the local traditions about her, the ceremony was omitted owing to the death of one of the neighbours. Yet the peasantry at night saw the torches in greater number than ever circling the hill, and Ainé herself in front, directing and ordering the procession.

"On another St. John's Night a number of girls had stayed late on the Hill watching the *cliars* (torches) and joining in the games. Suddenly Ainé appeared among them, thanked them for the honour they had done her, but said she now wished them to go home, as *they wanted the hill to themselves*. She let them understand whom she meant by *they*, for calling

some of the girls she made them look through a ring, when behold, the hill appeared crowded with people before invisible.”

“Here,” observed Mr. Alfred Nutt, “we have the antique ritual carried out on a spot hallowed to one of the antique powers, watched over and shared in by those powers themselves. Nowhere save in Gaeldom could be found such a pregnant illustration of the identity of the fairy class with the venerable powers to ensure whose goodwill rites and sacrifices, originally fierce and bloody, now a mere simulacrum of their pristine form, have been performed for countless ages.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Sinend and the Well of Knowledge**

There is a singular myth which, while intended to account for the name of the river Shannon, expresses the Celtic veneration for poetry and science, combined with the warning that they may not be approached without danger. The goddess Sinend, it was said, daughter of Lodan son of Lir, went to a certain well named Connla's Well, which is under the sea—*i.e.*, in the Land of Youth in Fairyland. “That is a well,” says the bardic narrative, “at which are the hazels of wisdom and inspirations, that is, the hazels of the science of poetry, and in the same hour their fruit and their blossom and their foliage break forth, and then fall upon the well in the same shower, which raises upon the water a royal surge of purple.” When Sinend came to the well we are not told what rites or preparation she had omitted, but the angry waters broke forth and overwhelmed her, and washed her up on the Shannon shore, where she died, giving to the river its name.<sup>30</sup> This myth of the hazels of inspiration and knowledge and their association with springing water runs through all Irish legend, and has been finely treated by a living Irish poet, Mr. G.W. Russell, in the following verses:

“A cabin on the mountain-side hid in a grassy nook,  
With door and window open wide, where friendly stars may  
look;

The rabbit shy may patter in, the winds may enter free  
Who roam around the mountain throne in living ecstasy.

“And when the sun sets dimmed in eve, and purple fills the  
air,  
I think the sacred hazel-tree is dropping berries there,  
From starry fruitage, waved aloft where Connla's Well  
o'erflows;  
For sure, the immortal waters run through every wind that  
blows.

“I think when Night towers up aloft and shakes the trembling  
dew,  
How every high and lonely thought that thrills my spirit  
through  
Is but a shining berry dropped down through the purple air,  
And from the magic tree of life the fruit falls everywhere.”

### **The Coming of the Milesians**

After the Second Battle of Moytura the Danaans held rule in Ireland until the coming of the Milesians, the sons of Miled. These are conceived in Irish legend as an entirely human race, yet in their origin they, like the other invaders of Ireland, go back to a divine and mythical ancestry. Miled, whose name occurs as a god in a Celtic inscription from Hungary, is represented as a son of Bilé. Bilé, like Balor, is one of the names of the god of Death, *i.e.*, of the Underworld. They come from “Spain”—the usual term employed by the later rationalising historians for the Land of the Dead.

The manner of their coming into Ireland was as follows: Ith, the grandfather of Miled, dwelt in a great tower which his father, Bregon, had built in “Spain.” One clear winter's day, when looking out westwards from this lofty tower, he saw the coast of Ireland in the distance, and resolved to sail to the unknown land.

He embarked with ninety warriors, and took land at Corcadyna, in the south-west. In connexion with this episode I may quote a passage of great beauty and interest from de Jubainville's "Irish Mythological Cycle":<sup>31</sup>

"According to an unknown writer cited by Plutarch, who died about the year 120 of the present era, and also by Procopius, who wrote in the sixth century A.D., 'the Land of the Dead' is the western extremity of Great Britain, separated from the eastern by an impassable wall. On the northern coast of Gaul, says the legend, is a populace of mariners whose business is to carry the dead across from the continent to their last abode in the island of Britain. The mariners, awakened in the night by the whisperings of some mysterious voice, arise and go down to the shore, where they find ships awaiting them which are not their own,<sup>32</sup> and, in these, invisible beings, under whose weight the vessels sink almost to the gunwales. They go on board, and with a single stroke of the oar, says one text, in one hour, says another, they arrive at their destination, though with their own vessels, aided by sails, it would have taken them at least a day and a night to reach the coast of Britain. When they come to the other shore the invisible passengers land, and at the same time the unloaded ships are seen to rise above the waves, and a voice is heard announcing the names of the new arrivals, who have just been added to the inhabitants of the Land of the Dead.

"One stroke of the oar, one hour's voyage at most, suffices for the midnight journey which transfers the Dead from the Gaulish continent to their final abode. Some mysterious law, indeed, brings together in the night the great spaces which divide the domain of the living from that of the dead in daytime. It was the same law which enabled Ith one fine winter evening to perceive from the Tower of Bregon, in the Land of the Dead, the shores of Ireland, or the land of the living. The phenomenon took place in winter; for winter is a sort of night; winter, like night, lowers the barriers between the regions of Death and those of Life; like night, winter gives to life the semblance of death, and suppresses, as it were, the dread abyss that lies between the two."

At this time, it is said, Ireland was ruled by three Danaan kings, grandsons of the Dagda. Their names were MacCuill, MacCecht, and MacGrené, and their wives were named respectively Banba, Fohla, and Eriu. The Celtic habit of conceiving divine persons in triads is here illustrated. These triads represent one person each, and the mythical character of that personage is evident from the name of one of them, MacGrené, Son of the Sun. The names of the three goddesses have each at different times been applied to Ireland, but that of the third, Eriu, has alone persisted, and in the dative form, Erinn, is a poetic name for the country to this day. That Eriu is the wife of MacGrené means, as de Jubainville observes, that the Sun-god, the god of Day, Life, and Science, has wedded the land and is reigning over it.

Ith, on landing, finds that the Danaan king, Neit, has just been slain in a battle with the Fomorians, and the three sons, MacCuill and the others, are at the fortress of Aileach, in Co. Donegal, arranging for a division of the land among themselves. At first they welcome Ith, and ask him to settle their inheritance. Ith gives his judgment, but, in concluding, his admiration for the newly discovered country breaks out: "Act," he says, "according to the laws of justice, for the country you dwell in is a good one, it is rich in fruit and honey, in wheat and in fish; and in heat and cold it is temperate." From this panegyric the Danaans conclude that Ith has designs upon their land, and they seize him and put him to death. His companions, however, recover his body and bear it back with them in their ships to "Spain"; when the children of Miled resolve to take vengeance for the outrage and prepare to invade Ireland.

They were commanded by thirty-six chiefs, each having his own ship with his family and his followers. Two of the company are said to have perished on the way. One of the sons of Miled, having climbed to the masthead of his vessel to look out for the coast of Ireland, fell into the sea and was drowned. The other was Skena, wife of the poet Amergin, son of Miled, who died on the way. The Milesians buried her when they landed, and called the place "Inverskena" after her; this was the ancient name of the Kenmare River in Co. Kerry.



“It was on a Thursday, the first of May, and the seventeenth day of the moon, that the sons of Miled arrived in Ireland. Partholan also landed in Ireland on the first of May, but on a different day of the week and of the moon; and it was on the first day of May, too, that the pestilence came which in the space of one week destroyed utterly his race. The first of May was sacred to Beltené, one of the names of the god of Death, the god who gives life to men and takes it away from them again. Thus it was on the feast day of this god that the sons of Miled began their conquest of Ireland.”<sup>33</sup>

### **The Poet Amergin**

When the poet Amergin set foot upon the soil of Ireland it is said that he chanted a strange and mystical lay:

“I am the Wind that blows over the sea,  
I am the Wave of the Ocean;  
I am the Murmur of the billows;  
I am the Ox of the Seven Combats;  
I am the Vulture upon the rock;  
I am a Ray of the Sun;  
I am the fairest of Plants;  
I am a Wild Boar in valour;  
I am a Salmon in the Water;  
I am a Lake in the plain;  
I am the Craft of the artificer;  
I am a Word of Science;  
I am the Spear-point that gives battle;  
I am the god that creates in the head of man the fire of thought.  
Who is it that enlightens the assembly upon the mountain, if not I?

Who telleth the ages of the moon, if not I?

“Who showeth the place where the sun goes to rest, if not I?

De Jubainville, whose translation I have in the main followed, observes upon this strange utterance:

“There is a lack of order in this composition, the ideas, fundamental and subordinate, are jumbled together without method; but there is no doubt as to the meaning: the *filé* (poet) is the Word of Science, he is the god who gives to man the fire of thought; and as science is not distinct from its object, as God and Nature are but one, the being of the *filé* is mingled with the winds and the waves, with the wild animals and the warrior's arms.”<sup>34</sup>

Two other poems are attributed to Amergin, in which he invokes the land and physical features of Ireland to aid him:

“I invoke the land of Ireland,  
Shining, shining sea;  
Fertile, fertile Mountain;  
Gladed, gladed wood!  
Abundant river, abundant in water!  
Fish-abounding lake!”<sup>35</sup>

### **The Judgment of Amergin**

The Milesian host, after landing, advance to Tara, where they find the three kings of the Danaans awaiting them, and summon them to deliver up the island. The Danaans ask for three days' time to consider whether they shall quit Ireland, or submit, or give battle; and they propose to leave the decision, upon their request, to Amergin. Amergin pronounces judgment—“the first judgment which was delivered in Ireland.” He agrees that the Milesians must not take their foes by surprise—they are to withdraw the length of nine waves from the shore, and then return; if they then conquer the Danaans the land is to be fairly theirs by right of battle.

The Milesians submit to this decision and embark on their ships. But no sooner have they drawn *off* for this mystical distance of the nine waves than a mist and storm are raised by the sorceries of the Danaans—the coast of Ireland is hidden from their sight, and they wander dispersed upon the ocean. To ascertain if it is a natural or a Druidic tempest which afflicts them, a man named Aranan is sent up to the masthead to see if the wind is blowing there also or not. He is flung from the swaying mast, but as he falls to his death he cries his message to his shipmates: “There is no storm aloft.” Amergin, who as poet—that is to say, Druid—takes the lead in all critical situations, thereupon chants his incantation to the land of Erin. The wind falls, and they turn their prows, rejoicing, towards the shore. But one of the Milesian lords, Eber Donn, exults in brutal rage at the prospect of putting all the dwellers in Ireland to the sword; the tempest immediately springs up again, and many of the Milesian ships founder, Eber Donn's being among them. At last a remnant of the Milesians find their way to shore, and land in the estuary of the Boyne.

### **The Defeat of the Danaans**

A great battle with the Danaans at Telltown<sup>36</sup> then follows. The three kings and three queens of the Danaans, with many of their people, are slain, and the children of Miled—the last of the mythical invaders of Ireland—enter upon the sovereignty of Ireland. But the People of Dana do not withdraw. By their magic art they cast over themselves a veil of invisibility, which they can put on or off as they choose. There are two Irelands henceforward, the spiritual and the earthly. The Danaans dwell in the spiritual Ireland, which is portioned out among them by their great overlord, the Dagda. Where the human eye can see but green mounds and ramparts, the relics of ruined fortresses or sepulchres, there rise the fairy palaces of the defeated divinities; there they hold their revels in eternal sunshine, nourished by the magic meat and ale that give them undying youth and beauty; and thence they come forth at times to mingle with mortal men in love or in war. The ancient mythical literature conceives them as heroic and splendid in

strength and beauty. In later times, and as Christian influences grew stronger, they dwindle into fairies, the People of the Sidhe;<sup>37</sup> but they have never wholly perished; to this day the Land of Youth and its inhabitants live in the imagination of the Irish peasant.

### **The Meaning of the Danaan Myth**

All myths constructed by a primitive people are symbols, and if we can discover what it is that they symbolise we have a valuable clue to the spiritual character, and sometimes even to the history, of the people from whom they sprang. Now the meaning of the Danaan myth as it appears in the bardic literature, though it has undergone much distortion before it reached us, is perfectly clear. The Danaans represent the Celtic reverence for science, poetry, and artistic skill, blended, of course, with the earlier conception of the divinity of the powers of Light. In their combat with the Firbolgs the victory of the intellect over dulness and ignorance is plainly portrayed—the comparison of the heavy, blunt weapon of the Firbolgs with the light and penetrating spears of the People of Dana is an indication which it is impossible to mistake. Again, in their struggle with a far more powerful and dangerous enemy, the Fomorians, we are evidently to see the combat of the powers of Light with evil of a more positive kind than that represented by the Firbolgs. The Fomorians stand not for mere dulness or stupidity, but for the forces of tyranny, cruelty, and greed—for moral rather than for intellectual darkness.

### **The Meaning of the Milesian Myth**

But the myth of the struggle of the Danaans with the sons of Miled is more difficult to interpret. How does it come that the lords of light and beauty, wielding all the powers of thought (represented by magic and sorcery), succumbed to a human race, and were dispossessed by them of their hard-won inheritance? What is the meaning of this shrinking of their powers which at once took place when the Milesians came on the scene? The

Milesians were not on the side of the powers of darkness. They were guided by Amergin, a clear embodiment of the idea of poetry and thought. They were regarded with the utmost veneration, and the dominant families of Ireland all traced their descent to them. Was the Kingdom of Light, then, divided against itself? Or, if not, to what conception in the Irish mind are we to trace the myth of the Milesian invasion and victory?

The only answer I can see to this puzzling question is to suppose that the Milesian myth originated at a much later time than the others, and was, in its main features, the product of Christian influences. The People of Dana were in possession of the country, but they were pagan divinities—they could not stand for the progenitors of a Christian Ireland. They had somehow or other to be got rid of, and an ethnic group of less embarrassing antecedents substituted for them. So the Milesians were fetched from “Spain” and endowed with the main characteristics, only more humanised, of the People of Dana. But the latter, in contradistinction to the usual attitude of early Christianity, are treated very tenderly in the story of their overthrow. One of them has the honour of giving her name to the island, the brutality of one of the conquerors towards them is punished with death, and while dispossessed of the lordship of the soil they still enjoy life in the fair world which by their magic art they have made invisible to mortals. They are no longer gods, but they are more than human, and frequent instances occur in which they are shown as coming forth from their fairy world, being embraced in the Christian fold, and entering into heavenly bliss. With two cases of this redemption of the Danaans we shall close this chapter on the Invasion Myths of Ireland.

The first is the strange and beautiful tale of the Transformation of the Children of Lir.

### **The Children of Lir**

Lir was a Danaan divinity, the father of the sea-god Mananan who continually occurs in magical tales of the Milesian cycle. He had married in succession two sisters, the second of whom was named Aoife.<sup>38</sup> She was

childless, but the former wife of Lir had left him four children, a girl named Fionuala<sup>39</sup> and three boys. The intense love of Lir for the children made the stepmother jealous, and she ultimately resolved on their destruction. It will be observed, by the way, that the People of Dana, though conceived as unaffected by time, and naturally immortal, are nevertheless subject to violent death either at the hands of each other or even of mortals.

With her guilty object in view, Aoife goes on a journey to a neighbouring Danaan king, Bōv the Red, taking the four children with her. Arriving at a lonely place by Lake Derryvaragh, in Westmeath, she orders her attendants to slay the children. They refuse, and rebuke her. Then she resolves to do it herself; but, says the legend, “her womanhood overcame her,” and instead of killing the Children she transforms them by spells of sorcery into four white swans, and lays on them the following doom: three hundred years they are to spend on the waters of Lake Derryvaragh, three hundred on the Straits of Moyle (between Ireland and Scotland), and three hundred on the Atlantic by Erris and Inishglory. After that, “when the woman of the South is mated with the man of the North,” the enchantment is to have an end.

When the children fail to arrive with Aoife at the palace of Bōv her guilt is discovered, and Bōv changes her into “a demon of the air.” She flies forth shrieking, and is heard of no more in the tale. But Lir and Bōv seek out the swan-children, and find that they have not only human speech, but have preserved the characteristic Danaan gift of making wonderful music. From all parts of the island companies of the Danaan folk resort to Lake Derryvaragh to hear this wondrous music and to converse with the swans, and during that time a great peace and gentleness seemed to pervade the land.

But at last the day came for them to leave the fellowship of their kind and take up their life by the wild cliffs and ever angry sea of the northern coast. Here they knew the worst of loneliness, cold, and storm. Forbidden to land, their feathers froze to the rocks in the winter nights, and they were often buffeted and driven apart by storms. As Fionuala sings:

“Cruel to us was Aoife  
Who played her magic upon us,  
And drove us out on the water—  
Four wonderful snow-white swans.

“Our bath is the frothing brine,  
In bays by red rocks guarded;  
For mead at our father's table  
We drink of the salt, blue sea.

“Three sons and a single daughter,  
In clefts of the cold rocks dwelling,  
The hard rocks, cruel to mortals—  
We are full of keening to-night.”

Fionuala, the eldest of the four, takes the lead in all their doings, and mothers the younger children most tenderly, wrapping her plumage round them on nights of frost. At last the time comes to enter on the third and last period of their doom, and they take flight for the western shores of Mayo. Here too they suffer much hardship; but the Milesians have now come into the land, and a young farmer named Evric, dwelling on the shores of Erris Bay, finds out who and what the swans are, and befriends them. To him they tell their story, and through him it is supposed to have been preserved and handed down. When the final period of their suffering is close at hand they resolve to fly towards the palace of their father Lir, who dwells, we are told, at the Hill of the White Field, in Armagh, to see how things have fared with him. They do so; but not knowing what has happened on the coming of the Milesians, they are shocked and bewildered to find nothing but green mounds and whin-bushes and nettles where once stood—and still stands, only that they cannot see it—the palace of their father. Their eyes are holden, we are to understand, because a higher destiny was in store for them than to return to the Land of Youth.

On Erris Bay they hear for the first time the sound of a Christian bell. It comes from the chapel of a hermit who has established himself there. The swans are at first startled and terrified by the “thin, dreadful sound,” but afterwards approach and make themselves known to the hermit, who instructs them in the faith, and they join him in singing the offices of the Church.

Now it happens that a princess of Munster, Deoca, (the “woman of the South”) became betrothed to a Connacht chief named Lairgnen, and begged him as a wedding gift to procure for her the four wonderful singing swans whose fame had come to her. He asks them of the hermit, who refuses to give them up, whereupon the “man of the North” seizes them violently by the silver chains with which the hermit had coupled them, and drags them off to Deoca. This is their last trial. Arrived in her presence, an awful transformation befalls them. The swan plumage falls off, and reveals, not, indeed, the radiant forms of the Danaan divinities, but four withered, snowy-haired, and miserable human beings, shrunken in the decrepitude of their vast old age. Lairgnen flies from the place in horror, but the hermit prepares to administer baptism at once, as death is rapidly approaching them. “Lay us in one grave,” says Fionuala, “and place Conn at my right hand and Fiachra at my left, and Hugh before my face, for there they were wont to be when I sheltered them many a winter night upon the seas of Moyle.” And so it was done, and they went to heaven; but the hermit, it is said, sorrowed for them to the end of his earthly days.<sup>40</sup>

In all Celtic legend there is no more tender and beautiful tale than this of the Children of Lir.

### **The Tale of Ethné**

But the imagination of the Celtic bard always played with delight on the subjects of these transition tales, where the reconciling of the pagan order with the Christian was the theme. The same conception is embodied in the tale of Ethné, which we have now to tell.



It is said that Mananan mac Lir had a daughter who was given in fosterage to the Danaan prince Angus, whose fairy palace was at Brugh na Boyna. This is the great sepulchral tumulus now called New Grange, on the Boyne. At the same time the steward of Angus had a daughter born to him whose name was Ethné, and who was allotted to the young princess as her handmaiden.

Ethné grew up into a lovely and gentle maiden, but it was discovered one day that she took no nourishment of any kind, although the rest of the household fed as usual on the magic swine of Mananan, which might be eaten to-day and were alive again for the feast to-morrow. Mananan was called in to penetrate the mystery, and the following curious story came to light. One of the chieftains of the Danaans who had been on a visit with Angus, smitten by the girl's beauty, had endeavoured to possess her by force. This woke in Ethné's pure spirit the moral nature which is proper to man, and which the Danaan divinities know not. As the tale says, her "guardian demon" left her, and an angel of the true God took its place. After that event she abstained altogether from the food of Faëry, and was miraculously nourished by the will of God. After a time, however, Mananan and Angus, who had been on a voyage to the East, brought back thence two cows whose milk never ran dry, and as they were supposed to have come from a sacred land Ethné lived on their milk thenceforward.

All this is supposed to have happened during the reign of Eremon, the first Milesian king of all Ireland, who was contemporary with King David. At the time of the coming of St. Patrick, therefore, Ethné would have been about fifteen hundred years of age. The Danaan folk grow up from childhood to maturity, but then they abide unaffected by the lapse of time.

Now it happened one summer day that the Danaan princess whose handmaid Ethné was went down with all her maidens to bathe in the river Boyne. When arraying themselves afterwards Ethné discovered, to her dismay—and this incident was, of course, an instance of divine interest in her destiny—that she had lost the Veil of Invisibility, conceived here as a magic charm worn on the person, which gave her the entrance to the Danaan fairyland and hid her from mortal eyes. She could not find her way

back to the palace of Angus, and wandered up and down the banks of the river seeking in vain for her companions and her home. At last she came to a walled garden, and, looking through the gate, saw inside a stone house of strange appearance and a man in a long brown robe. The man was a Christian monk, and the house was a little church or oratory. He beckoned her in, and when she had told her story to him he brought her to St. Patrick, who completed her adoption into the human family by giving her the rite of baptism.

Now comes in a strangely pathetic episode which reveals the tenderness, almost the regret, with which early Irish Christianity looked back on the lost world of paganism. As Ethné was one day praying in the little church by the Boyne she heard suddenly a rushing sound in the air, and innumerable voices, as it seemed from a great distance, lamenting and calling her name. It was her Danaan kindred, who were still seeking for her in vain. She sprang up to reply, but was so overcome with emotion that she fell in a swoon on the floor. She recovered her senses after a while, but from that day she was struck with a mortal sickness, and in no long time she died, with her head upon the breast of St. Patrick, who administered to her the last rites, and ordained that the church should be named after her, Kill Ethné—a name doubtless borne, at the time the story was composed, by some real church on the banks of Boyne.<sup>41</sup>

## **Christianity and Paganism in Ireland**

These, taken together with numerous other legendary incidents which might be quoted, illustrate well the attitude of the early Celtic Christians, in Ireland at least, towards the divinities of the older faith. They seem to preclude the idea that at the time of the conversion of Ireland the pagan religion was associated with cruel and barbarous practices, on which the national memory would look back with horror and detestation.

# **The Early Milesian Kings**

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## **The Danaans after the Milesian Conquest**

The kings and heroes of the Milesian people now fill the foreground of the stage in Irish legendary history. But, as we have indicated, the Danaan divinities are by no means forgotten. The fairyland in which they dwell is ordinarily inaccessible to mortals, yet it is ever near at hand; the invisible barriers may be, and often are, crossed by mortal men, and the Danaans themselves frequently come forth from them; mortals may win brides of Faëry who mysteriously leave them after a while, and women bear glorious children of supernatural fatherhood. Yet whatever the Danaans may have been in the original pre-Christian conceptions of the Celtic Irish, it would be a mistake to suppose that they figure in the legends, as these have now come down to us, in the light of gods as we understand this term. They are for the most part radiantly beautiful, they are immortal (with limitations), and they wield mysterious powers of sorcery and enchantment. But no sort of moral governance of the world is ever for a moment ascribed to them, nor (in the bardic literature) is any act of worship paid to them. They do not die naturally, but they can be slain both by each other and by mortals, and on the whole the mortal people is the stronger. Their strength when they come into conflict (as frequently happens) with men lies in stratagem and illusion; when the issue can be fairly knitted between the rival powers it is the human that conquers. The early kings and heroes of the Milesian group are, indeed, often represented as so mightily endowed with supernatural power that it is impossible to draw a clear distinction between them and the People of Dana in this respect. The Danaans are much nobler and more exalted beings, as they figure in the bardic literature, than the fairies into which they ultimately degenerated in the popular imagination; they may be said to hold a position intermediate between these and the Greek deities as portrayed in Homer. But the true worship of the Celts, in Ireland as

elsewhere, seems to have been paid, not to these poetical personifications of their ideals of power and beauty, but rather to elemental forces represented by actual natural phenomena—rocks, rivers, the sun, the wind, the sea. The most binding of oaths was to swear by the Wind and Sun, or to invoke some other power of nature; no name of any Danaan divinity occurs in an Irish oath formula. When, however, in the later stages of the bardic literature, and still more in the popular conceptions, the Danaan deities had begun to sink into fairies, we find rising into prominence a character probably older than that ascribed to them in the literature, and, in a way, more august. In the literature it is evident that they were originally representatives of science and poetry—the intellectual powers of man. But in the popular mind they represented, probably at all times and certainly in later Christian times, not intellectual powers, but those associated with the fecundity of earth. They were, as a passage in the Book of Armagh names them, *dei terreni*, earth-gods, and were, and are still, invoked by the peasantry to yield increase and fertility. The literary conception of them is plainly Druidic in origin, the other popular; and the popular and doubtless older conception has proved the more enduring.

But these features of Irish mythology will appear better in the actual tales than in any critical discussion of them; and to the tales let us now return.

### **The Milesian Settlement of Ireland**

The Milesians had three leaders when they set out for the conquest of Ireland—Eber Donn (Brown Eber), Eber Finn (Fair Eber), and Eremon. Of these the first-named, as we have seen, was not allowed to enter the land—he perished as a punishment for his brutality. When the victory over the Danaans was secure the two remaining brothers turned to the Druid Amergin for a judgment as to their respective titles to the sovereignty. Eremon was the elder of the two, but Eber refused to submit to him. Thus Irish history begins, alas! with dissension and jealousy. Amergin decided that the land should belong to Eremon for his life, and pass to Eber after his death.

But Eber refused to submit to the award, and demanded an immediate partition of the new-won territory. This was agreed to, and Eber took the southern half of Ireland, “from the Boyne to the Wave of Cleena,”<sup>42</sup> while Eremon occupied the north. But even so the brethren could not be at peace, and after a short while war broke out between them. Eber was slain, and Eremon became sole King of Ireland, which he ruled from Tara, the traditional seat of that central authority which was always a dream of the Irish mind, but never a reality of Irish history.

### **Tiernmas and Crom Cruach**

Of the kings who succeeded Eremon, and the battles they fought and the forests they cleared away and the rivers and lakes that broke out in their reign, there is little of note to record till we come to the reign of Tiernmas, fifth in succession from Eremon. He is said to have introduced into Ireland the worship of Crom Cruach, on Moyslaught (The Plain of Adoration<sup>43</sup>), and to have perished himself with three-fourths of his people while worshipping this idol on November Eve, the period when the reign of winter was inaugurated. Crom Cruach was no doubt a solar deity, but no figure at all resembling him can be identified among the Danaan divinities. Tiernmas also, it is said, found the first gold-mine in Ireland, and introduced variegated colours into the clothing of the people. A slave might wear but one colour, a peasant two, a soldier three, a wealthy landowner four, a provincial chief five, and an Ollav, or royal person, six. Ollav was a term applied to a certain Druidic rank; it meant much the same as “doctor,” in the sense of a learned man—a master of science. It is a characteristic trait that the Ollav is endowed with a distinction equal to that of a king.

### **Ollav Fōla**

The most distinguished Ollav of Ireland was also a king, the celebrated Ollav Fōla, who is supposed to have been eighteenth from Eremon and to have reigned about 1000 B.C. He was the Lycurgus or Solon of Ireland,

giving to the country a code of legislature, and also subdividing it, under the High King at Tara, among the provincial chiefs, to each of whom his proper rights and obligations were allotted. To Ollav Fōla is also attributed the foundation of an institution which, whatever its origin, became of great importance in Ireland—the great triennial Fair or Festival at Tara, where the sub-kings and chiefs, bards, historians, and musicians from all parts of Ireland assembled to make up the genealogical records of the clan chieftainships, to enact laws, hear disputed cases, settle succession, and so forth; all these political and legislative labours being lightened by song and feast. It was a stringent law that at this season all enmities must be laid aside; no man might lift his hand against another, or even institute a legal process, while the Assembly at Tara was in progress. Of all political and national institutions of this kind Ollav Fōla was regarded as the traditional founder, just as Goban the Smith was the founder of artistry and handicraft, and Amergin of poetry. But whether the Milesian king had any more objective reality than the other more obviously mythical figures it is hard to say. He is supposed to have been buried in the great tumulus at Loughcrew, in Westmeath.

### **Kimbay and the Founding of Emain Macha**

With Kimbay (*Cimbaoth*), about 300 B.C., we come to a landmark in history. “All the historical records of the Irish, prior to Kimbay, were dubious”—so, with remarkable critical acumen for his age, wrote the eleventh-century historian Tierna of Clonmacnois.<sup>44</sup> There is much that is dubious in those that follow, but we are certainly on firmer historical ground. With the reign of Kimbay one great fact emerges into light: we have the foundation of the kingdom of Ulster at its centre, Emain Macha, a name redolent to the Irish student of legendary splendour and heroism. Emain Macha is now represented by the grassy ramparts of a great hill-fortress close to Ard Macha (Armagh). According to one of the derivations offered in Keating's “History of Ireland,” *Emain* is derived from *eo*, a bodkin, and *muin*, the neck, the word being thus equivalent to “brooch,”

and Emain Macha means the Brooch of Macha. An Irish brooch was a large circular wheel of gold or bronze, crossed by a long pin, and the great circular rampart surrounding a Celtic fortress might well be imaginatively likened to the brooch or a giantess guarding her cloak, or territory.<sup>45</sup> The legend of Macha tells that she was the daughter of Red Hugh, an Ulster prince who had two brothers, Dithorba and Kimbay. They agreed to enjoy, each in turn, the sovereignty of Ireland. Red Hugh came first, but on his death Macha refused to give up the realm and fought Dithorba for it, whom she conquered and slew. She then, in equally masterful manner, compelled Kimbay to wed her, and ruled all Ireland as queen. I give the rest of the tale in the words of Standish O'Grady:

“The five sons of Dithorba, having been expelled out of Ulster, fled across the Shannon, and in the west of the kingdom plotted against Macha. Then the Queen went down alone into Connacht and found the brothers in the forest, where, wearied with the chase, they were cooking a wild boar which they had slain, and were carousing before a fire which they had kindled. She appeared in her grimmest aspect, as the war-goddess, red all over, terrible and hideous as war itself but with bright and flashing eyes. One by one the brothers were inflamed by her sinister beauty, and one by one she overpowered and bound them. Then she lifted her burthen of champions upon her back and returned with them into the north. With the spear of her brooch she marked out on the plain the circuit of the city of Emain Macha, whose ramparts and trenches were constructed by the captive princes, labouring like slaves under her command.”

“The underlying idea of all this class of legend,” remarks Mr. O'Grady, “is that if men cannot master war, war will master them; and that those who aspired to the Ard-Rieship (High-Kingship) of all Erin must have the war-gods on their side.”<sup>46</sup>

Macha is an instance of the intermingling of the attributes of the Danaan with the human race of which I have already spoken.

## **Laery and Covac**

The next king who comes into legendary prominence is Ugainy the Great, who is said to have ruled not only all Ireland, but a great part of Western Europe, and to have wedded a Gaulish princess named Kesair. He had two sons, Laery and Covac. The former inherited the kingdom, but Covac, consumed and sick with envy, sought to slay him, and asked the advice of a Druid as to how this could be managed, since Laery, justly suspicious, never would visit him without an armed escort. The Druid bade him feign death, and have word sent to his brother that he was on his bier ready for burial. This Covac did, and when Laery arrived and bent over the supposed corpse Covac stabbed him to the heart, and slew also one of his sons, Ailill,<sup>47</sup> who attended him. Then Covac ascended the throne, and straightway his illness left him.

### **Legends of Maon, Son of Ailill**

He did a brutal deed, however, upon a son of Ailill's named Maon, about whom a number of legends cluster. Maon, as a child, was brought into Covac's presence, and was there compelled, says Keating, to swallow a portion of his father's and grandfather's hearts, and also a mouse with her young. From the disgust he felt, the child lost his speech, and seeing him dumb, and therefore innocuous, Covac let him go. The boy was then taken into Munster, to the kingdom of Feramorc, of which Scoriath was king, and remained with him some time, but afterwards went to Gaul, his great-grandmother Kesair's country, where his guards told the king that he was heir to the throne of Ireland, and he was treated with great honour and grew up into a noble youth. But he left behind him in the heart of Moriath, daughter of the King of Feramorc, a passion that could not be stilled, and she resolved to bring him back to Ireland. She accordingly equipped her father's harper, Craftiny, with many rich gifts, and wrote for him a love-lay, in which her passion for Maon was set forth, and to which Craftiny composed an enchanting melody. Arrived in France, Craftiny made his way to the king's court, and found occasion to pour out his lay to Maon. So deeply stirred was he by the beauty and passion of the song that his speech



returned to him and he broke out into praises of it, and was thenceforth dumb no more. The King of Gaul then equipped him with an armed force and sent him to Ireland to regain his kingdom. Learning that Covac was at a place near at hand named Dinrigh, Maon and his body of Gauls made a sudden attack upon him and slew him there and then, with all his nobles and guards. After the slaughter a Druid of Covac's company asked one of the Gauls who their leader was. "The Mariner" (*Loingseach*), replied the Gaul, meaning the captain of the fleet—*i.e.*, Maon. "Can he speak?" inquired the Druid, who had begun to suspect the truth. "He does speak" (*Labraidh*), said the man; and henceforth the name "Labra the Mariner" clung to Maon son of Ailill, nor was he known by any other. He then sought out Moriath, wedded her, and reigned over Ireland ten years.

From this invasion of the Gauls the name of the province of Leinster is traditionally derived. They were armed with spears having broad blue-green iron heads called *laighne* (pronounced "lyna"), and as they were allotted lands in Leinster and settled there, the province was called in Irish *Laighin* ("Ly-in") after them—the Province of the Spearmen.<sup>48</sup>

Of Labra the Mariner, after his accession, a curious tale is told. He was accustomed, it is said, to have his hair cropped but once a year, and the man to do this was chosen by lot, and was immediately afterwards put to death. The reason of this was that, like King Midas in the similar Greek myth, he had long ears like those of a horse, and he would not have this deformity known. Once it fell, however, that the person chosen to crop his hair was the only son of a poor widow, by whose tears and entreaties the king was prevailed upon to let him live, on condition that he swore by the Wind and Sun to tell no man what he might see. The oath was taken, and the young man returned to his mother. But by-and-by the secret so preyed on his mind that he fell into a sore sickness, and was near to death, when a wise Druid was called in to heal him. "It is the secret that is killing him," said the Druid, "and he will never be well till he reveals it. Let him therefore go along the high-road till he come to a place where four roads meet. Let him there turn to the right, and the first tree he shall meet on the road, let him tell his secret to that, and he shall be rid of it, and recover." So the youth

did; and the first tree was a willow. He laid his lips close to the bark, whispered his secret to it, and went home, light-hearted as of old. But it chanced that shortly after this the harper Craftiny broke his harp and needed a new one, and as luck would have it the first suitable tree he came to was the willow that had the king's secret. He cut it down, made his harp from it, and performed that night as usual in the king's hall; when, to the amazement of all, as soon as the harper touched the strings the assembled guests heard them chime the words, "Two horse's ears hath Labra the Mariner." The king then, seeing that the secret was out, plucked off his hood and showed himself plainly; nor was any man put to death again on account of this mystery. We have seen that the compelling power of Craftiny's music had formerly cured Labra's dumbness. The sense of something magical in music, as though supernatural powers spoke through it, is of constant recurrence in Irish legend.

### **Legend-Cycle of Conary Mōr**

We now come to a cycle of legends centering on, or rather closing with, the wonderful figure of the High King Conary Mōr—a cycle so charged with splendour, mystery, and romance that to do it justice would require far more space than can be given to it within the limits of this work.<sup>49</sup>

### **Etain in Fairyland**

The preliminary events of the cycle are transacted in the "Land of Youth," the mystic country of the People of Dana after their dispossession by the Children of Miled. Midir the Proud son of the Dagda, a Danaan prince dwelling on Slieve Callary, had a wife named Fuamnach. After a while he took to himself another bride, Etain, whose beauty and grace were beyond compare, so that "as fair as Etain" became a proverbial comparison for any beauty that exceeded all other standards. Fuamnach therefore became jealous of her rival, and having by magic art changed her into a butterfly, she raised a tempest that drove her forth from the palace, and kept her for

seven years buffeted hither and thither throughout the length and breadth of Erin. At last, however, a chance gust of wind blew her through a window of the fairy palace of Angus on the Boyne. The immortals cannot be hidden from each other, and Angus knew what she was. Unable to release her altogether from the spell of Fuamnach, he made a sunny bower for her, and planted round it all manner of choice and honey-laden flowers, on which she lived as long as she was with him, while in the secrecy of the night he restored her to her own form and enjoyed her love. In time, however, her refuge was discovered by Fuamnach; again the magic tempest descended upon her and drove her forth; and this time a singular fate was hers. Blown into the palace of an Ulster chieftain named Etar, she fell into the drinking-cup of Etar's wife just as the latter was about to drink. She was swallowed in the draught, and in due time, having passed into the womb of Etar's wife, she was born as an apparently mortal child, and grew up to maidenhood knowing nothing of her real nature and ancestry.

### **Eochy and Etain**

About this time it happened that the High King of Ireland, Eochy,<sup>50</sup> being wifeless and urged by the nobles of his land to take a queen—"for without thou do so," they said, "we will not bring our wives to the Assembly at Tara"—sent forth to inquire for a fair and noble maiden to share his throne. The messengers report that Etain, daughter of Etar, is the fairest maiden in Ireland, and the king journeys forth to visit her. A piece of description here follows which is one of the most highly wrought and splendid in Celtic or perhaps in any literature. Eochy finds Etain with her maidens by a spring of water, whither she had gone forth to wash her hair:

"A clear comb of silver was held in her hand, the comb was adorned with gold; and near her, as for washing, was a bason of silver whereon four birds had been chased, and there were little bright gems of carbuncles on the rims of the bason. A bright purple mantle waved round her; and beneath it was another mantle ornamented with silver fringes: the outer mantle was clasped over her bosom with a golden brooch. A tunic she wore with a long

hood that might cover her head attached to it; it was stiff and glossy with green silk beneath red embroidery of gold, and was clasped over her breasts with marvellously wrought clasps of silver and gold; so that men saw the bright gold and the green silk flashing against the sun. On her head were two tresses of golden hair, and each tress had been plaited into four strands; at the end of each strand was a little ball of gold. And there was that maiden undoing her hair that she might wash it, her two arms out through the armholes of her smock. Each of her two arms was as white as the snow of a single night, and each of her cheeks was as rosy as the foxglove. Even and small were the teeth in her head, and they shone like pearls. Her eyes were as blue as a hyacinth, her lips delicate and crimson; very high, soft and white were her shoulders. Tender, polished and white were her wrists; her fingers long and of great whiteness; her nails were beautiful and pink. White as snow, or the foam of a wave, was her neck; long was it, slender, and as soft as silk. Smooth and white were her thighs; her knees were round and firm and white; her ankles were as straight as the rule of a carpenter. Her feet were slim and as white as the ocean's foam; evenly set were her eyes; her eyebrows were of a bluish black, such as you see upon the shell of a beetle. Never a maid fairer than she, or more worthy of love, was till then seen by the eyes of men; and it seemed to them that she must be one of those that have come from the fairy mounds.”<sup>51</sup>

The king wooed her and made her his wife, and brought her back to Tara.

### **The Love-Story of Ailill**

It happened that the king had a brother named Ailill, who, on seeing Etain, was so smitten with her beauty that he fell sick of the intensity of his passion and wasted almost to death. While he was in this condition Eochy had to make a royal progress through Ireland. He left his brother—the cause of whose malady none suspected—in Etain's care, bidding her do what she could for him, and, if he died, to bury him with due ceremonies and erect an Ogham stone above his grave.<sup>52</sup> Etain goes to visit the brother; she inquires

the cause of his illness; he speaks to her in enigmas, but at last, moved beyond control by her tenderness, he breaks out in an avowal of his passion. His description of the yearning of hopeless love is a lyric of extraordinary intensity. "It is closer than the skin," he cries, "it is like a battle with a spectre, it overwhelms like a flood, it is a weapon under the sea, it is a passion for an echo." By "a weapon under the sea" the poet means that love is like one of the secret treasures of the fairy-folk in the kingdom of Mananan—as wonderful and as unattainable.

Etain is now in some perplexity; but she decides, with a kind of naïve good-nature, that although she is not in the least in love with Ailill, she cannot see a man die of longing for her, and she promises to be his. Possibly we are to understand here that she was prompted by the fairy nature, ignorant of good and evil, and alive only to pleasure and to suffering. It must be said, however, that in the Irish myths in general this, as we may call it, "fairy" view of morality is the one generally prevalent both among Danaans and mortals—both alike strike one as morally irresponsible.

Etain now arranges a tryst with Ailill in a house outside of Tara—for she will not do what she calls her "glorious crime" in the king's palace. But Ailill on the eve of the appointed day falls into a profound slumber and misses his appointment. A being in his shape does, however, come to Etain, but merely to speak coldly and sorrowfully of his malady, and departs again. When the two meet once more the situation is altogether changed. In Ailill's enchanted sleep his unholy passion for the queen has passed entirely away. Etain, on the other hand, becomes aware that behind the visible events there are mysteries which she does not understand.

### **Midir the Proud**

The explanation soon follows. The being who came to her in the shape of Ailill was her Danaan husband, Midir the Proud. He now comes to woo her in his true shape, beautiful and nobly apparelled, and entreats her to fly with him to the Land of Youth, where she can be safe henceforward, since her

persecutor, Fuamnach, is dead. He it was who shed upon Ailill's eyes the magic slumber. His description of the fairyland to which he invites her is given in verses of great beauty:

### **The Land of Youth**

“O fair-haired woman, will you come with me to the marvellous land, full of music, where the hair is primrose-yellow and the body white as snow?

There none speaks of ‘mine’ or ‘thine’—white are the teeth and black the brows; eyes flash with many-coloured lights, and the hue of the foxglove is on every cheek.

Pleasant to the eye are the plains of Erin, but they are a desert to the Great Plain.

Heady is the ale of Erin, but the ale of the Great Plain is headier.

It is one of the wonders of that land that youth does not change into age.

Smooth and sweet are the streams that flow through it; mead and wine abound of every kind; there men are all fair, without blemish; there women conceive without sin.

We see around us on every side, yet no man seeth us; the cloud of the sin of Adam hides us from their observation.

“O lady, if thou wilt come to my strong people, the purest of gold shall be on thy head—thy meat shall be swine's flesh unsalted,<sup>53</sup> new milk and mead shall thou drink with me there, O fair-haired woman.

I have given this remarkable lyric at length because, though Christian and ascetic ideas are obviously discernible in it, it represents on the whole the pagan and mythical conception of the Land of Youth, the country of the Dead.

Etain, however, is by no means ready to go away with a stranger and to desert the High King for a man “without name or lineage.” Midir tells her who he is, and all her own history of which, in her present incarnation, she knows nothing; and he adds that it was one thousand and twelve years from Etain's birth in the Land of Youth till she was born a mortal child to the wife of Etar. Ultimately Etain agrees to return with Midir to her ancient home, but only on condition that the king will agree to their severance, and with this Midir has to be content for the time.

### **A Game of Chess**

Shortly afterwards he appears to King Eochy, as already related,<sup>54</sup> on the Hill of Tara. He tells the king that he has come to play a game of chess with him, and produces a chessboard of silver with pieces of gold studded with jewels. To be a skilful chess-player was a necessary accomplishment of kings and nobles in Ireland, and Eochy enters into the game with zest. Midir allows him to win game after game, and in payment for his losses he performs by magic all kinds of tasks for Eochy, reclaiming land, clearing forests, and building causeways across bogs—here we have a touch of the popular conception of the Danaans as earth deities associated with agriculture and fertility. At last, having excited Eochy's cupidity and made him believe himself the better player, he proposes a final game, the stakes to be at the pleasure of the victor after the game is over. Eochy is now defeated.

“My stake is forfeit to thee,” said Eochy.

“Had I wished it, it had been forfeit long ago,” said Midir.

“What is it that thou desirest me to grant?” said Eochy.

“That I may hold Etain in my arms and obtain a kiss from her,” said Midir.

The king was silent for a while; then he said: “One month from to-day thou shalt come, and the thing thou desirest shall be granted thee.”

### **Midir and Etain**

Eochy's mind foreboded evil, and when the appointed day came he caused the palace of Tara to be surrounded by a great host of armed men to keep Midir out. All was in vain, however; as the king sat at the feast, while Etain handed round the wine, Midir, more glorious than ever, suddenly stood in their midst. Holding his spears in his left hand, he threw his right around Etain, and the couple rose lightly in the air and disappeared through a roof-window in the palace. Angry and bewildered, the king and his warriors rushed out of doors, but all they could see was two white swans that circled in the air above the palace, and then departed in long, steady flight towards the fairy mountain of Slievenamon. And thus Queen Etain rejoined her kindred.

### **War with Fairyland**

Eochy, however, would not accept defeat, and now ensues what I think is the earliest recorded war with Fairyland since the first dispossession of the Danaans. After searching Ireland for his wife in vain, he summoned to his aid the Druid Dalan. Dalan tried for a year by every means in his power to find out where she was. At last he made what seems to have been an operation of wizardry of special strength—“he made three wands of yew, and upon the wands he wrote an ogham; and by the keys of wisdom that he had, and by the ogham, it was revealed to him that Etain was in the fairy mound of Bri-Leith, and that Midir had borne her thither.”

Eochy then assembled his forces to storm and destroy the fairy mound in which was the palace of Midir. It is said that he was nine years digging up one mound after another, while Midir and his folk repaired the devastation as fast as it was made. At last Midir, driven to the last stronghold, attempted a stratagem—he offered to give up Etain, and sent



her with fifty handmaids to the king, but made them all so much alike that Eochy could not distinguish the true Etain from her images. She herself, it is said, gave him a sign by which to know her. The motive of the tale, including the choice of the mortal rather than the god, reminds one of the beautiful Hindu legend of Damayanti and Nala. Eochy regained his queen, who lived with him till his death, ten years afterwards, and bore him one daughter, who was named Etain, like herself.

## The Tale of Conary Mōr

From this Etain ultimately sprang the great king Conary Mōr, who shines in Irish legend as the supreme type of royal splendour, power, and beneficence, and whose overthrow and death were compassed by the Danaans in vengeance for the devastation of their sacred dwellings by Eochy. The tale in which the death of Conary is related is one of the most antique and barbaric in conception of all Irish legends, but it has a magnificence of imagination which no other can rival. To this great story the tale of Etain and Midir may be regarded as what the Irish called a *priomscel*, “introductory tale,” showing the more remote origin of the events related. The genealogy of Conary Mōr will help the reader to understand the connexion of events.

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Eochy=Etain.
|
Cormac, King=Etain Oig (Etain the younger).
of Ulster. |
|
Eterskel, King=Messbuachalla (the cowherd's fosterling).
of Erin. |
|
Conary Mōr.
```

## The Law of the Geis

The tale of Conary introduces us for the first time to the law or institution of the *geis*, which plays henceforward a very important part in Irish legend, the violation or observance of a *geis* being frequently the turning-point in a

tragic narrative. We must therefore delay a moment to explain to the reader exactly what this peculiar institution was.

Dineen's "Irish Dictionary" explains the word *geis* (pronounced "gaysh"—plural, "gaysha") as meaning "a bond, a spell, a prohibition, a taboo, a magical injunction, the violation of which led to misfortune and death."<sup>55</sup> Every Irish chieftain or personage of note had certain *geise* peculiar to himself which he must not transgress. These *geise* had sometimes reference to a code of chivalry—thus Dermot of the Love-spot, when appealed to by Grania to take her away from Finn, is under *geise* not to refuse protection to a woman. Or they may be merely superstitious or fantastic—thus Conary, as one of his *geise*, is forbidden to follow three red horsemen on a road, nor must he kill birds (this is because, as we shall see, his totem was a bird). It is a *geis* to the Ulster champion, Fergus mac Roy, that he must not refuse an invitation to a feast; on this turns the Tragedy of the Sons of Usnach. It is not at all clear who imposed these *geise* or how any one found out what his personal *geise* were—all that was doubtless an affair of the Druids. But they were regarded as sacred obligations, and the worst misfortunes were to be apprehended from breaking them. Originally, no doubt, they were regarded as a means of keeping oneself in proper relations with the other world—the world of Faëry—and were akin to the well-known Polynesian practice of the "tabu." I prefer, however, to retain the Irish word as the only fitting one for the Irish practice.

### **The Cowherd's Fosterling**

We now return to follow the fortunes of Etain's great-grandson, Conary. Her daughter, Etain Oig, as we have seen from the genealogical table, married Cormac, King of Ulster. She bore her husband no children save one daughter only. Embittered by her barrenness and his want of an heir, the king put away Etain, and ordered her infant to be abandoned and thrown into a pit. "Then his two thralls take her to a pit, and she smiles a laughing smile at them as they were putting her into it."<sup>56</sup> After that they cannot leave her to die, and they carry her to a cowherd of Eterskel, King of Tara,

by whom she is fostered and taught “till she became a good embroidress and there was not in Ireland a king's daughter dearer than she.” Hence the name she bore, Messbuachalla (“Messboo’hala”), which means “the cowherd's foster-child.”

For fear of her being discovered, the cowherds keep the maiden in a house of wickerwork having only a roof-opening. But one of King Eterskel's folk has the curiosity to climb up and look in, and sees there the fairest maiden in Ireland. He bears word to the king, who orders an opening to be made in the wall and the maiden fetched forth, for the king was childless, and it had been prophesied to him by his Druid that a woman of unknown race would bear him a son. Then said the king: “This is the woman that has been prophesied to me.”

### **Parentage and Birth of Conary**

Before her release, however, she is visited by a denizen from the Land of Youth. A great bird comes down through her roof-window. On the floor of the hut his bird-plumage falls from him and reveals a glorious youth. Like Danaë, like Leda, like Ethlinn daughter of Balor, she gives her love to the god. Ere they part he tells her that she will be taken to the king, but that she will bear to her Danaan lover a son whose name shall be Conary, and that it shall be forbidden to him to go a-hunting after birds.

So Conary was born, and grew up into a wise and noble youth, and he was fostered with a lord named Desa, whose three great-grandsons grew up with him from childhood. Their names were Ferlee and Fergar and Ferrogan; and Conary, it is said, loved them well and taught them his wisdom.

### **Conary the High King**

Then King Eterskel died, and a successor had to be appointed. In Ireland the eldest son did not succeed to the throne or chieftaincy as a matter of right, but the ablest and best of the family at the time was supposed to be selected

by the clan. In this tale we have a curious account of this selection by means of divination. A “bull-feast” was held—*i.e.*, a bull was slain, and the diviner would “eat his fill and drink its broth”; then he went to bed, where a truth-compelling spell was chanted over him. Whoever he saw in his dream would be king. So at Ægira, in Achæa, as Whitley Stokes points out, the priestess of Earth drank the fresh blood of a bull before descending into the cave to prophesy. The dreamer cried in his sleep that he saw a naked man going towards Tara with a stone in his sling.

The bull-feast was held at Tara, but Conary was then with his three foster-brothers playing a game on the Plains of Liffey. They separated, Conary going towards Dublin, where he saw before him a flock of great birds, wonderful in colour and beauty. He drove after them in his chariot, but the birds would go a spear-cast in front and light, and fly on again, never letting him come up with them till they reached the sea-shore. Then he lighted down from his chariot and took out his sling to cast at them, whereupon they changed into armed men and turned on him with spears and swords. One of them, however, protected him, and said: “I am Nemglan, king of thy father's birds; and thou hast been forbidden to cast at birds, for here there is no one but is thy kin.” “Till to-day,” said Conary, “I knew not this.”

“Go to Tara to-night,” said Nemglan; “the bull-feast is there, and through it thou shalt be made king. A man stark naked, who shall go at the end of the night along one of the roads to Tara, having a stone and a sling—'tis he that shall be king.”

So Conary stripped off his raiment and went naked through the night to Tara, where all the roads were being watched by chiefs having changes of royal raiment with them to clothe the man who should come according to the prophecy. When Conary meets them they clothe him and bring him in, and he is proclaimed King of Erin.

### **Conary's Geise**

A long list of his *geise* is here given, which are said to have been declared to him by Nemglan. “The bird-reign shall be noble,” said he, “and these shall be thy *geise*:

“Thou shalt not go right-handwise round Tara, nor left-handwise round Bregia,<sup>57</sup>

Thou shalt not hunt the evil-beasts of Cerna,

Thou shalt not go out every ninth night beyond Tara.

Thou shalt not sleep in a house from which firelight shows after sunset, or in which light can be seen from without.

No three Reds shall go before thee to the house of Red.

No rapine shall be wrought in thy reign.

After sunset, no one woman alone or man alone shall enter the house in which thou art.

Thou shalt not interfere in a quarrel between two of thy thralls.”

Conary then entered upon his reign, which was marked by the fair seasons and bounteous harvests always associated in the Irish mind with the reign of a good king. Foreign ships came to the ports. Oak-mast for the swine was up to the knees every autumn; the rivers swarmed with fish. “No one slew another in Erin during his reign, and to every one in Erin his fellow's voice seemed as sweet as the strings of lutes. From mid-spring to mid-autumn no wind disturbed a cow's tail.”

### **Beginning of the Vengeance**

Disturbance, however, came from another source. Conary had put down all raiding and rapine, and his three foster-brothers, who were born reavers, took it ill. They pursued their evil ways in pride and wilfulness, and were at last captured red-handed. Conary would not condemn them to death, as the people begged him to do, but spared them for the sake of his kinship in fosterage. They were, however, banished from Erin and bidden to go

raiding overseas, if raid they must. On the seas they met another exiled chief, Ingcel the One-Eyed, son of the King of Britain, and joining forces with him they attacked the fortress in which Ingcel's father, mother, and brothers were guests at the time, and all were destroyed in a single night. It was then the turn of Ingcel to ask their help in raiding the land of Erin, and gathering a host of other outlawed men, including the seven Manés, sons of Ailell and Maev of Connacht, besides Ferlee, Fergar, and Ferrogran, they made a descent upon Ireland, taking land on the Dublin coast near Howth.

Meantime Conary had been lured by the machinations of the Danaans into breaking one after another of his *geise*. He settles a quarrel between two of his serfs in Munster, and travelling back to Tara they see the country around it lit with the glare of fires and wrapped in clouds of smoke. A host from the North, they think, must be raiding the country, and to escape it Conary's company have to turn right-handwise round Tara and then left-handwise round the Plain of Bregia. But the smoke and flames were an illusion made by the Fairy Folk, who are now drawing the toils closer round the doomed king. On his way past Bregia he chases “the evil beasts of Cerna”—whatever they were—“but he saw it not till the chase was ended.”

### **Da Derga's Hostel and the Three Reds**

Conary had now to find a resting-place for the night, and he recollects that he is not far from the Hostel of the Leinster lord, Da Derga, which gives its name to this bardic tale.<sup>58</sup> Conary had been generous to him when Da Derga came visiting to Tara, and he determined to seek his hospitality for the night. Da Derga dwelt in a vast hall with seven doors near to the present town of Dublin, probably at Donnybrook, on the high-road to the south. As the cavalcade are journeying thither an ominous incident occurs—Conary marks in front of them on the road three horsemen clad all in red and riding on red horses. He remembers his *geis* about the “three Reds,” and sends a messenger forward to bid them fall behind. But however the messenger lashes his horse he fails to get nearer than the length of a spear-cast to the three Red Riders. He shouts to them to turn back and follow the king, but

one of them, looking over his shoulder, bids him ironically look out for “great news from a Hostel.” Again and again the messenger is sent to them with promises of great reward if they will fall behind instead of preceding Conary. At last one of them chants a mystic and terrible strain. “Lo, my son, great the news. Weary are the steeds we ride —the steeds from the fairy mounds. Though we are living, we are dead. Great are the signs: destruction of life; sating of ravens; feeding of crows; strife of slaughter; wetting of sword-edge; shields with broken bosses after sundown. Lo, my son!” Then they ride forward, and, alighting from their red steeds, fasten them at the portal of Da Derga's Hostel and sit down inside. “Derga,” it may be explained, means “red.” Conary had therefore been preceded by three red horsemen to the House of Red. “All my *geise*,” he remarks forebodingly, “have seized me to-night.”

### **Gathering of the Hosts**

From this point the story of Conary Mōr takes on a character of supernatural vastness and mystery, the imagination of the bardic narrator dilating, as it were, with the approach of the crisis. Night has fallen, and the pirate host of Ingcel is encamped on the shores of Dublin Bay. They hear the noise of the royal cavalcade, and a long-sighted messenger is sent out to discover what it is. He brings back word of the glittering and multitudinous host which has followed Conary to the Hostel. A crashing noise is heard—Ingcel asks of Ferrogan what it may be—it is the giant warrior mac Cecht striking flint on steel to kindle fire for the king's feast. “God send that Conary be not there to-night,” cry the sons of Desa; “woe that he should be under the hurt of his foes.” But Ingcel reminds them of their compact—he had given them the plundering of his own father and brethren; they cannot refuse to stand by him in the attack he meditates on Conary in the Hostel. A glare of the fire lit by mac Cecht is now perceived by the pirate host, shining through the wheels of the chariots which are drawn up around the open doors of the Hostel. Another of the *geise* of Conary has been broken.

Ingcel and his host now proceed to build a great cairn of stones, each man contributing one stone, so that there may be a memorial of the fight, and also a record of the number slain when each survivor removes his stone again.

## **The Morrigan**

The scene now shifts to the Hostel, where the king's party has arrived and is preparing for the night. A solitary woman comes to the door and seeks admission. "As long as a weaver's beam were each of her two shins, and they were as dark as the back of a stag-beetle. A greyish, woolly mantle she wore. Her hair reached to her knee. Her mouth was twisted to one side of her head." It was the Morrigan, the Danaan goddess of Death and Destruction. She leant against the doorpost of the house and looked evilly on the king and his company. "Well, O woman," said Conary, "if thou art a witch, what seest thou for us?" "Truly I see for thee," she answered, "that neither fell nor flesh of thine shall escape from the place into which thou hast come, save what birds will bear away in their claws." She asks admission. Conary declares that his *geis* forbids him to receive a solitary man or woman after sunset. "If in sooth," she says, "it has befallen the king not to have room in his house for the meal and bed of a solitary woman, they will be gotten apart from him from some one possessing generosity." "Let her in, then," says Conary, "though it is a *geis* of mine."

## **Conary and his Retinue**

A lengthy and brilliant passage now follows describing how Ingcel goes to spy out the state of affairs in the Hostel. Peeping through the chariot-wheels, he takes note of all he sees, and describes to the sons of Desa the appearance and equipment of each prince and mighty man in Conary's retinue, while Ferrogan and his brother declare who he is and what destruction he will work in the coming fight. There is Cormac, son of Conor, King of Ulster, the fair and good; there are three huge, black and



black-robed warriors of the Picts; there is Conary's steward, with bristling hair, who settles every dispute—a needle would be heard falling when he raises his voice to speak, and he bears a staff of office the size of a mill-shaft; there is the warrior mac Cecht, who lies supine with his knees drawn up—they resemble two bare hills, his eyes are like lakes, his nose a mountain-peak, his sword shines like a river in the sun. Conary's three sons are there, golden-haired, silk-robed, beloved of all the household, with “manners of ripe maidens, and hearts of brothers, and valour of bears.” When Ferrogan hears of them he weeps and cannot proceed till hours of the night have passed. Three Fomorian hostages of horrible aspect are there also; and Conall of the Victories with his blood-red shield; and Duftach of Ulster with his magic spear, which, when there is a premonition of battle, must be kept in a brew of soporific herbs, or it will flame on its haft and fly forth raging for massacre; and three giants from the Isle of Man with horses' manes reaching to their heels. A strange and unearthly touch is introduced by a description of three naked and bleeding forms hanging by ropes from the roof—they are the daughters of the Bav, another name for the Morrigan, or war-goddess, “three of awful boding,” says the tale enigmatically, “those are the three that are slaughtered at every time.” We are probably to regard them as visionary beings, portending war and death, visible only to Ingcel. The hall with its separate chambers is full of warriors, cup-bearers, musicians playing, and jugglers doing wonderful feats; and Da Derga with his attendants dispensing food and drink. Conary himself is described as a youth; “the ardour and energy of a king has he and the counsel of a sage; the mantle I saw round him is even as the mist of May-day—lovelier in each hue of it than the other.” His golden-hilted sword lies beside him—a forearm's length of it has escaped from the scabbard, shining like a beam of light. “He is the mildest and gentlest and most perfect king that has come into the world, even Conary son of Eterskel ... great is the tenderness of the sleepy, simple man till he has chanced on a deed of valour. But if his fury and his courage are awakened when the champions of Erin and Alba are at him in the house, the Destruction will not be wrought so long as he is therein ... sad were the quenching of that reign.”

## **Champions at the House**

Ingcel and the sons of Desa then march to the attack and surround the Hostel:

“Silence a while!” says Conary, “what is this?”

“Champions at the house,” says Conall of the Victories.

“There are warriors for them here,” answers Conary.

“They will be needed to-night,” Conall rejoins.

One of Desa's sons rushes first into the Hostel. His head is struck off and cast out of it again. Then the great struggle begins. The Hostel is set on fire, but the fire is quenched with wine or any liquids that are in it. Conary and his people sally forth—hundreds are slain, and the reavers, for the moment, are routed. But Conary, who has done prodigies of fighting, is athirst and can do no more till he gets water. The reavers by advice of their wizards have cut off the river Dodder, which flowed through the Hostel, and all the liquids in the house had been spilt on the fires.

## **Death of Conary**

The king, who is perishing of thirst, asks mac Cecht to procure him a drink, and mac Cecht turns to Conall and asks him whether he will get the drink for the king or stay to protect him while mac Cecht does it. “Leave the defence of the king to us,” says Conall, “and go thou to seek the drink, for of thee it is demanded.” Mac Cecht then, taking Conary's golden cup, rushes forth, bursting through the surrounding host, and goes to seek for water. Then Conall, and Cormac of Ulster, and the other champions, issue forth in turn, slaying multitudes of the enemy; some return wounded and weary to the little band in the Hostel, while others cut their way through the ring of foes. Conall, Sencha, and Duftach stand by Conary till the end; but mac Cecht is long in returning, Conary perishes of thirst, and the three heroes then fight their way out and escape, “wounded, broken, and maimed.”

Meantime mac Cecht has rushed over Ireland in frantic search for the water. But the Fairy Folk, who are here manifestly elemental powers controlling the forces of nature, have sealed all the sources against him. He tries the Well of Kesair in Wicklow in vain; he goes to the great rivers, Shannon and Slayney, Bann and Barrow—they all hide away at his approach; the lakes deny him also; at last he finds a lake, Loch Gara in Roscommon, which failed to hide itself in time, and thereat he fills his cup. In the morning he returned to the Hostel with the precious and hard-won draught, but found the defenders all dead or fled, and two of the reavers in the act of striking off the head of Conary. Mac Cecht struck off the head of one of them, and hurled a huge pillar stone after the other, who was escaping with Conary's head. The reaver fell dead on the spot, and mac Cecht, taking up his master's head, poured the water into its mouth. Thereupon the head spoke, and praised and thanked him for the deed.

### **Mac Cecht's Wound**

A woman then came by and saw mac Cecht lying exhausted and wounded on the field.

“Come hither, O woman,” says mac Cecht.

“I dare not go there,” says the woman, “for horror and fear of thee.”

But he persuades her to come, and says: “I know not whether it is a fly or gnat or an ant that nips me in the wound.”

The woman looked and saw a hairy wolf buried as far as the two shoulders in the wound. She seized it by the tail and dragged it forth, and it took “the full of its jaws out of him.”

“Truly,” says the woman, “this is an ant of the Ancient Land.”

And mac Cecht took it by the throat and smote it on the forehead, so that it died.

### **“Is thy Lord Alive?”**

The tale ends in a truly heroic strain. Conall of the Victories, as we have seen, had cut his way out after the king's death, and made his way to Teltin, where he found his father, Amorgin, in the garth before his dūn. Conall's shield-arm had been wounded by thrice fifty spears, and he reached Teltin now with half a shield, and his sword, and the fragments of his two spears.

“Swift are the wolves that have hunted thee, my son,” said his father.

“Tis this that has wounded us, old hero, an evil conflict with warriors,” Conall replied.

“Is thy lord alive?” asked Amorgin.

“He is *not* alive,” says Conall.

“I swear to God what the great tribes of Ulster swear: he is a coward who goes out of a fight alive having left his lord with his foes in death.”

“My wounds are not white, old hero,” says Conall. He showed him his shield-arm, whereon were thrice fifty spear-wounds. The sword-arm, which the shield had not guarded, was mangled and maimed and wounded and pierced, save that the sinews kept it to the body without separation.

“That arm fought to-night, my son,” says Amorgin.

“True is that, old hero,” says Conall of the Victories. “Many are they to whom it gave drinks of death to-night in front of the Hostel.”

So ends the story of Etain, and of the overthrow of Fairyland and the fairy vengeance wrought on the great-grandson of Eochy the High King.

# Tales of the Ultonian Cycle

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## The Curse of Macha

The centre of interest in Irish legend now shifts from Tara to Ulster, and a multitude of heroic tales gather round the Ulster king Conor mac Nessa, round Cuchulain,<sup>59</sup> his great vassal, and the Red Branch Order of chivalry, which had its seat in Emain Macha.

The legend of the foundation of Emain Macha has already been told.<sup>60</sup> But Macha, who was no mere woman, but a supernatural being, appears again in connexion with the history of Ulster in a very curious tale which was supposed to account for the strange debility or helplessness that at critical moments sometimes fell, it was believed, upon the warriors of the province.

The legend tells that a wealthy Ulster farmer named Crundchu, son of Agnoman, dwelling in a solitary place among the hills, found one day in his dūn a young woman of great beauty and in splendid array, whom he had never seen before. Crundchu, we are told, was a widower, his wife having died after bearing him four sons. The strange woman, without a word, set herself to do the household tasks, prepared dinner, milked the cow, and took on herself all the duties of the mistress of the household. At night she lay down at Crundchu's side, and thereafter dwelt with him as his wife; and they loved each other dearly. Her name was Macha.

One day Crundchu prepared himself to go to a great fair or assembly of the Ultonians, where there would be feasting and horse-racing, tournaments and music, and merrymaking of all kinds. Macha begged her husband not to go. He persisted. "Then," she said, "at least do not speak of me in the assembly, for I may dwell with you only so long as I am not spoken of."

It has been observed that we have here the earliest appearance in post-classical European literature of the well-known motive of the fairy bride who can stay with her mortal lover only so long as certain conditions are

observed, such as that he shall not spy upon her, ill-treat her, or ask of her origin.

Crundchu promised to obey the injunction, and went to the festival. Here the two horses of the king carried off prize after prize in the racing, and the people cried: "There is not in Ireland a swifter than the King's pair of horses."

"I have a wife at home," said Crundchu, in a moment of forgetfulness, "who can run quicker than these horses."

"Seize that man," said the angry king, "and hold him till his wife be brought to the contest."

So messengers went for Macha, and she was brought before the assembly; and she was with child. The king bade her prepare for the race. She pleaded her condition. "I am close upon my hour," she said. "Then hew her man in pieces," said the king to his guards. Macha turned to the bystanders. "Help me," she cried, "for a mother hath borne each of you! Give me but a short delay till I am delivered." But the king and all the crowd in their savage lust for sport would hear of no delay. "Then bring up the horses," said Macha, "and because you have no pity a heavier infamy shall fall upon you." So she raced against the horses, and outran them, but as she came to the goal she gave a great cry, and her travail seized her, and she gave birth to twin children. As she uttered that cry, however, all the spectators felt themselves seized with pangs like her own and had no more strength than a woman in her travail. And Macha prophesied: "From this hour the shame you have wrought on me will fall upon each man of Ulster. In the hours of your greatest need ye shall be weak and helpless as women in childbirth, and this shall endure for five days and four nights—to the ninth generation the curse shall be upon you." And so it came to pass; and this is the cause of the Debility of the Ultonians that was wont to afflict the warriors of the province.

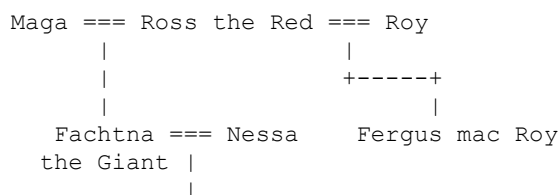
**Conor mac Nessa**

The chief occasion on which this Debility was manifested was when Maev, Queen of Connacht, made the famous Cattle-raid of Quelgny (*Tain Bo Cuailgne*), which forms the subject of the greatest tale in Irish literature. We have now to relate the preliminary history leading up to this epic tale and introducing its chief characters.

Fachtna the Giant, King of Ulster, had to wife Nessa, daughter of Echid Yellow-heel, and she bore him a son named Conor. But when Fachtna died Fergus son of Roy, his half-brother, succeeded him, Conor being then but a youth. Now Fergus loved Nessa, and would have wedded her, but she made conditions. "Let my son Conor reign one year," she said, "so that his posterity may be the descendants of a king, and I consent." Fergus agreed, and young Conor took the throne. But so wise and prosperous was his rule and so sagacious his judgments that, at the year's end, the people, as Nessa foresaw, would have him remain king; and Fergus, who loved the feast and the chase better than the toils of kingship, was content to have it so, and remained at Conor's court for a time, great, honoured, and happy, but king no longer.

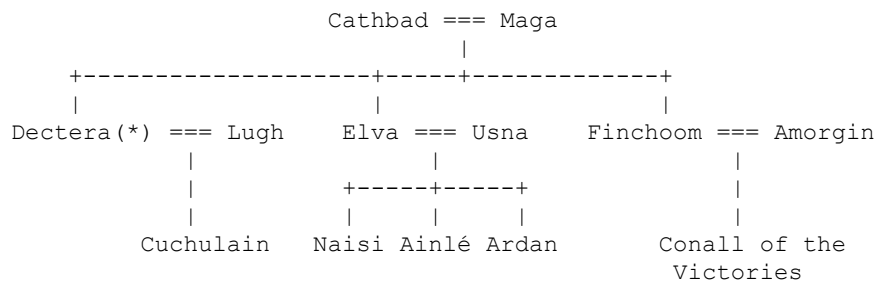
## The Red Branch

In his time was the glory of the “Red Branch” in Ulster, who were the offspring of Ross the Red, King of Ulster, with collateral relatives and allies, forming ultimately a kind of warlike Order. Most of the Red Branch heroes appear in the Ultonian Cycle of legend, so that a statement of their names and relationships may be usefully placed here before we proceed to speak of their doings. It is noticeable that they have a partly supernatural ancestry. Ross the Red, it is said, wedded a Danaan woman, Maga, daughter of Angus Ōg.<sup>61</sup> As a second wife he wedded a maiden named Roy. His descendants are as follows:



|  
Conor mac  
Nessa

But Maga was also wedded to the Druid Cathbad, and by him had three daughters, whose descendants played a notable part in the Ultonian legendary cycle.



(\*)Dectera also had a mortal husband, Sualtam, who passed as Cuchulain's father.

## Birth of Cuchulain

It was during the reign of Conor mac Nessa that the birth of the mightiest hero of the Celts, Cuchulain, came about, and this was the manner of it. The maiden Dectera, daughter of Cathbad, with fifty young girls, her companions at the court of Conor, one day disappeared, and for three years no searching availed to discover their dwelling-place or their fate. At last one summer day a flock of birds descended on the fields about Emain Macha and began to destroy the crops and fruit. The king, with Fergus and others of his nobles, went out against them with slings, but the birds flew only a little way off, luring the party on and on till at last they found themselves near the Fairy Mound of Angus on the river Boyne. Night fell, and the king sent Fergus with a party to discover some habitation where they might sleep. A hut was found, where they betook themselves to rest, but one of them, exploring further, came to a noble mansion by the river, and on entering it was met by a young man of splendid appearance. With the stranger was a lovely woman, his wife, and fifty maidens, who saluted the Ulster warrior with joy. And he recognised in them Dectera and her



maidens, whom they had missed for three years, and in the glorious youth Lugh of the Long Arm, son of Ethlinn. He went back with his tale to the king, who immediately sent for Dectera to come to him. She, alleging that she was ill, requested a delay; and so the night passed; but in the morning there was found in the hut among the Ulster warriors a new-born male infant. It was Dectera's gift to Ulster, and for this purpose she had lured them to the fairy palace by the Boyne. The child was taken home by the warriors and was given to Dectera's sister, Finchoom, who was then nursing her own child, Conall, and the boy's name was called Setanta. And the part of Ulster from Dundalk southward to Usna in Meath, which is called the Plain of Murthemney, was allotted for his inheritance, and in later days his fortress and dwelling-place was in Dundalk.

It is said that the Druid Morann prophesied over the infant: "His praise will be in the mouths of all men; charioteers and warriors, kings and sages will recount his deeds; he will win the love of many. This child will avenge all your wrongs; he will give combat at your fords, he will decide all your quarrels."

## **The Hound of Cullan**

When he was old enough the boy Setanta went to the court of Conor to be brought up and instructed along with the other sons of princes and chieftains. It was now that the event occurred from which he got the name of Cuchulain, by which he was hereafter to be known.

One afternoon King Conor and his nobles were going to a feast to which they were bidden at the dūn of a wealthy smith named Cullan, in Quelgny, where they also meant to spend the night. Setanta was to accompany them, but as the cavalcade set off he was in the midst of a game of hurley with his companions and bade the king go forward, saying he would follow later when his play was done. The royal company arrived at their destination as night began to fall. Cullan received them hospitably, and in the great hall they made merry over meat and wine while the lord of the house barred the gates of his fortress and let loose outside a huge and ferocious dog which

every night guarded the lonely mansion, and under whose protection, it was said, Cullan feared nothing less than the onset of an army.

But they had forgotten Setanta! In the middle of the laughter and music of the feast a terrible sound was heard which brought every man to his feet in an instant. It was the tremendous baying of the hound of Cullan, giving tongue as it saw a stranger approach. Soon the noise changed to the howls of a fierce combat, but, on rushing to the gates, they saw in the glare of the lanterns a young boy and the hound lying dead at his feet. When it flew at him he had seized it by the throat and dashed its life out against the side-posts of the gate. The warriors bore in the lad with rejoicing and wonder, but soon the triumph ceased, for there stood their host, silent and sorrowful over the body of his faithful friend, who had died for the safety of his house and would never guard it more.

“Give me,” then said the lad Setanta, “a whelp of that hound, O Cullan, and I will train him to be all to you that his sire was. And until then give me shield and spear and I will myself guard your house; never hound guarded it better than I will.”

And all the company shouted applause at the generous pledge, and on the spot, as a commemoration of his first deed of valour, they named the lad Cuchulain,<sup>62</sup> the Hound of Cullan, and by that name he was known until he died.

### **Cuchulain Assumes Arms**

When he was older, and near the time when he might assume the weapons of manhood, it chanced one day that he passed close by where Cathbad the Druid was teaching to certain of his pupils the art of divination and augury. One of them asked of Cathbad for what kind of enterprise that same day might be favourable; and Cathbad, having worked a spell of divination, said: “The youth who should take up arms on this day would become of all men in Erin most famous for great deeds, yet will his life be short and fleeting.” Cuchulain passed on as though he marked it not, and he came before the king. “What wilt thou?” asked Conor. “To take the arms of

manhood,” said Cuchulain. “So be it,” said the king, and he gave the lad two great spears. But Cuchulain shook them in his hand, and the staves splintered and broke. And so he did with many others; and the chariots in which they set him to drive he broke to pieces with stamping of his foot, until at last the king's own chariot of war and his two spears and sword were brought to the lad, and these he could not break, do what he would; so this equipment he retained.

### **His Courtship of Emer**

The young Cuchulain was by this grown so fair and noble a youth that every maid or matron on whom he looked was bewitched by him, and the men of Ulster bade him take a wife of his own. But none were pleasing to him, till at last he saw the lovely maiden Emer, daughter of Forgall, the lord of Lusca,<sup>63</sup> and he resolved to woo her for his bride. So he bade harness his chariot, and with Laeg, his friend and charioteer, he journeyed to Dūn Forgall.

As he drew near, the maiden was with her companions, daughters of the vassals of Forgall, and she was teaching them embroidery, for in that art she excelled all women. She had “the six gifts of womanhood—the gift of beauty, the gift of voice, the gift of sweet speech, the gift of needlework, the gift of wisdom, and the gift of chastity.”

Hearing the thunder of horse-hoofs and the clangour of the chariot from afar, she bade one of the maidens go to the rampart of the Dūn and tell her what she saw. “A chariot is coming on,” said the maiden, “drawn by two steeds with tossing heads, fierce and powerful; one is grey, the other black. They breathe fire from their jaws, and the clods of turf they throw up behind them as they race are like a flock of birds that follow in their track. In the chariot is a dark, sad man, comeliest of the men of Erin. He is clad in a crimson cloak, with a brooch of gold, and on his back is a crimson shield with a silver rim wrought with figures of beasts. With him as his charioteer is a tall, slender, freckled man with curling red hair held by a fillet of

bronze, with plates of gold at either side of his face. With a goad of red gold he urges the horses.”

When the chariot drew up Emer went to meet Cuchulain and saluted him. But when he urged his love upon her she told him of the might and the wiliness of her father Forgall, and of the strength of the champions that guarded her lest she should wed against his will. And when he pressed her more she said: “I may not marry before my sister Fial, who is older than I. She is with me here—she is excellent in handiwork.” “It is not Fial whom I love,” said Cuchulain. Then as they were conversing he saw the breast of the maiden over the bosom of her smock, and said to her: “Fair is this plain, the plain of the noble yoke.” “None comes to this plain,” said she, “who has not slain his hundreds, and thy deeds are still to do.”

So Cuchulain then left her, and drove back to Emain Macha.

### **Cuchulain in the Land of Skatha**

Next day Cuchulain bethought himself how he could prepare himself for war and for the deeds of heroism which Emer had demanded of him. Now he had heard of a mighty woman-warrior named Skatha, who dwelt in the Land of Shadows,<sup>64</sup> and who could teach to young heroes who came to her wonderful feats of arms. So Cuchulain went overseas to find her, and many dangers he had to meet, black forests and desert plains to traverse, before he could get tidings of Skatha and her land. At last he came to the Plain of Ill-luck, where he could not cross without being mired in its bottomless bogs or sticky clay, and while he was debating what he should do he saw coming towards him a young man with a face that shone like the sun,<sup>65</sup> and whose very look put cheerfulness and hope into his heart. The young man gave him a wheel and told him to roll it before him on the plain, and to follow it whithersoever it went. So Cuchulain set the wheel rolling, and as it went it blazed with light that shot like rays from its rim, and the heat of it made a firm path across the quagmire, where Cuchulain followed safely.

When he had passed the Plain of Ill-luck, and escaped the beasts of the Perilous Glen, he came to the Bridge of the Leaps, beyond which was the

country of Skatha. Here he found on the hither side many sons of the princes of Ireland who were come to learn feats of war from Skatha, and they were playing at hurley on the green. And among them was his friend Ferdia, son of the Firbolg, Daman; and they all asked him of the news from Ireland. When he had told them all he asked Ferdia how he should pass to the dūn of Skatha. Now the Bridge of Leaps was very narrow and very high, and it crossed a gorge where far below swung the tides of a boiling sea, in which ravenous monsters could be seen swimming.

“Not one of us has crossed that bridge,” said Ferdia, “for there are two feats that Skatha teaches last, and one is the leap across the bridge, and the other the thrust of the Gae Bolg.<sup>66</sup> For if a man step upon one end of that bridge, the middle straightway rises up and flings him back, and if he leap upon it he may chance to miss his footing and fall into the gulf, where the sea-monsters are waiting for him.”

But Cuchulain waited till evening, when he had recovered his strength from his long journey, and then essayed the crossing of the bridge. Three times he ran towards it from a distance, gathering all his powers together, and strove to leap upon the middle, but three times it rose against him and flung him back, while his companions jeered at him because he would not wait for the help of Skatha. But at the fourth leap he lit fairly on the centre of the bridge, and with one leap more he was across it, and stood before the strong fortress of Skatha; and she wondered at his courage and vigour, and admitted him to be her pupil.

For a year and a day Cuchulain abode with Skatha, and all the feats she had to teach he learned easily, and last of all she taught him the use of the Gae Bolg, and gave him that dreadful weapon, which she had deemed no champion before him good enough to have. And the manner of using the Gae Bolg was that it was thrown with the foot, and if it entered an enemy's body it filled every limb and crevice of him with its barbs. While Cuchulain dwelt with Skatha his friend above all friends and his rival in skill and valour was Ferdia, and ere they parted they vowed to love and help one another as long as they should live.

## **Cuchulain and Aifa**

Now whilst Cuchulain was in the Land of the Shadows it chanced that Skatha made war on the people of the Princess Aifa, who was the fiercest and strongest of the woman-warriors of the world, so that even Skatha feared to meet her in arms. On going forth to the war, therefore, Skatha mixed with Cuchulain's drink a sleepy herb so that he should not wake for four-and-twenty hours, by which time the host would be far on its way, for she feared lest evil should come to him ere he had got his full strength. But the potion that would have served another man for a day and a night only held Cuchulain for one hour; and when he waked up he seized his arms and followed the host by its chariot-tracks till he came up with them. Then it is said that Skatha uttered a sigh, for she knew that he would not be restrained from the war.

When the armies met, Cuchulain and the two sons of Skatha wrought great deeds on the foe, and slew six of the mightiest of Aifa's warriors. Then Aifa sent word to Skatha and challenged her to single combat. But Cuchulain declared that he would meet the fair Fury in place of Skatha, and he asked first of all what were the things she most valued. "What Aifa loves most," said Skatha, "are her two horses, her chariot and her charioteer." Then the pair met in single combat, and every champion's feat which they knew they tried on each other in vain, till at last a blow of Aifa's shattered the sword of Cuchulain to the hilt. At this Cuchulain cried out: "Ah me! behold the chariot and horses of Aifa, fallen into the glen!" Aifa glanced round, and Cuchulain, rushing in, seized her round the waist and slung her over his shoulder and bore her back to the camp of Skatha. There he flung her on the ground and put his knife to her throat. She begged for her life, and Cuchulain granted it on condition that she made a lasting peace with Skatha, and gave hostages for her fulfilment of the pledge. To this she agreed, and Cuchulain and she became not only friends but lovers.

## **The Tragedy of Cuchulain and Connla**

Before Cuchulain left the Land of Shadows he gave Aifa a golden ring, saying that if she should bear him a son he was to be sent to seek his father in Erin so soon as he should have grown so that his finger would fit the ring. And Cuchulain said, "Charge him under *geise* that he shall not make himself known, that he never turn out of the way for any man, nor ever refuse a combat. And be his name called Connla."

In later years it is narrated that one day when King Conor of Ulster and the lords of Ulster were at a festal gathering on the Strand of the Footprints they saw coming towards them across the sea a little boat of bronze, and in it a young lad with gilded oars in his hands. In the boat was a heap of stones, and ever and anon the lad would put one of these stones into a sling and cast it at a flying sea-bird in such fashion that it would bring down the bird alive to his feet. And many other wonderful feats of skill he did. Then Conor said, as the boat drew nearer: "If the grown men of that lad's country came here they would surely grind us to powder. Woe to the land into which that boy shall come!"

When the boy came to land, a messenger, Condery, was sent to bid him be off. "I will not turn back for thee," said the lad, and Condery repeated what he had said to the king. Then Conall of the Victories was sent against him, but the lad slung a great stone at him, and the whizz and wind of it knocked him down, and the lad sprang upon him, and bound his arms with the strap of his shield. And so man after man was served; some were bound, and some were slain, but the lad defied the whole power of Ulster to turn him back, nor would he tell his name or lineage.

"Send for Cuchulain," then said King Conor. And they sent a messenger to Dundalk, where Cuchulain was with Emer his wife, and bade him come to do battle against a stranger boy whom Conall of the Victories could not overcome. Emer threw her arm round Cuchulain's neck. "Do not go," she entreated. "Surely this is the son of Aifa. Slay not thine only son." But Cuchulain said: "Forbear, woman! Were it Connla himself I would slay him for the honour of Ulster," and he bade yoke his chariot and went to the Strand. Here he found the boy tossing up his weapons and doing marvellous feats with them. "Delightful is thy play, boy," said Cuchulain; "who art thou

and whence dost thou come?" "I may not reveal that," said the lad. "Then thou shalt die," said Cuchulain. "So be it," said the lad, and then they fought with swords for a while, till the lad delicately shore off a lock of Cuchulain's hair. "Enough of trifling," said Cuchulain, and they closed with each other, but the lad planted himself on a rock and stood so firm that Cuchulain could not move him, and in the stubborn wrestling they had the lad's two feet sank deep into the stone and made the footprints whence the Strand of the Footprints has its name. At last they both fell into the sea, and Cuchulain was near being drowned, till he bethought himself of the Gae Bolg, and he drove that weapon against the lad and it ripped up his belly. "That is what Skatha never taught me," cried the lad. "Woe is me, for I am hurt." Cuchulain looked at him and saw the ring on his finger. "It is true," he said; and he took up the boy and bore him on shore and laid him down before Conor and the lords of Ulster. "Here is my son for you, men of Ulster," he said. And the boy said: "It is true. And if I had five years to grow among you, you would conquer the world on every side of you and rule as far as Rome. But since it is as it is, point out to me the famous warriors that are here, that I may know them and take leave of them before I die." Then one after another they were brought to him, and he kissed them and took leave of his father, and he died; and the men of Ulster made his grave and set up his pillar-stone with great mourning. This was the only son Cuchulain ever had, and this son he slew.

This tale, as I have given it here, dates from the ninth century, and is found in the "Yellow Book of Lecan." There are many other Gaelic versions of it in poetry and prose. It is one of the earliest extant appearances in literature of the since well-known theme of the slaying of a heroic son by his father. The Persian rendering of it in the tale of Sohrab and Rustum has been made familiar by Matthew Arnold's fine poem. In the Irish version it will be noted that the father is not without a suspicion of the identity of his antagonist, but he does battle with him under the stimulus of that passionate sense of loyalty to his prince and province which was Cuchulain's most signal characteristic.



To complete the story of Aifa and her son we have anticipated events, and now turn back to take up the thread again.

### **Cuchulain's First Foray**

After a year and a day of training in warfare under Skatha, Cuchulain returned to Erin, eager to test his prowess and to win Emer for his wife. So he bade harness his chariot and drove out to make a foray upon the fords and marches of Connacht, for between Connacht and Ulster there was always an angry surf of fighting along the borders.

And first he drove to the White Cairn, which is on the highest of the Mountains of Mourne, and surveyed the land of Ulster spread out smiling in the sunshine far below and bade his charioteer tell him the name of every hill and plain and dūn that he saw. Then turning southwards he looked over the plains of Bregia, and the charioteer pointed out to him Tara and Teltin, and Brugh na Boyna and the great dūn of the sons of Nechtan. “Are they,” asked Cuchulain, “those sons of Nechtan of whom it is said that more of the men of Ulster have fallen by their hands than are yet living on the earth?” “The same,” said the charioteer. “Then let us drive thither,” said Cuchulain. So, much unwilling, the charioteer drove to the fortress of the sons of Nechtan, and there on the green before it they found a pillar-stone, and round it a collar of bronze having on it writing in Ogham. This Cuchulain read, and it declared that any man of age to bear arms who should come to that green should hold it *geis* for him to depart without having challenged one of the dwellers in the dūn to single combat. Then Cuchulain flung his arms round the stone, and, swaying it backwards and forwards, heaved it at last out of the earth and flung it, collar and all, into the river that ran hard by. “Surely,” said the charioteer, “thou art seeking for a violent death, and now thou wilt find it without delay.”

Then Foill son of Nechtan came forth from the dūn, and seeing Cuchulain, whom he deemed but a lad, he was annoyed. But Cuchulain bade him fetch his arms, “for I slay not drivers nor messengers nor unarmed men,” and Foill went back into the dūn. “Thou canst not slay him,” then

said the charioteer, “for he is invulnerable by magic power to the point or edge of any blade.” But Cuchulain put in his sling a ball of tempered iron, and when Foill appeared he slung at him so that it struck his forehead, and went clean through brain and skull; and Cuchulain took his head and bound it to his chariot-rim. And other sons of Nechtan, issuing forth, he fought with and slew by sword or spear; and then he fired the dūn and left it in a blaze and drove on exultant. And on the way he saw a flock of wild swans, and sixteen of them he brought down alive with his sling, and tied them to the chariot; and seeing a herd of wild deer which his horses could not overtake he lighted down and chased them on foot till he caught two great stags, and with thongs and ropes he made them fast to the chariot.

But at Emain Macha a scout of King Conor came running in to give him news. “Behold, a solitary chariot is approaching swiftly over the plain; wild white birds flutter round it and wild stags are tethered to it; it is decked all round with the bleeding heads of enemies.” And Conor looked to see who was approaching, and he saw that Cuchulain was in his battle-fury, and would deal death around him whomsoever he met; so he hastily gave order that a troop of the women of Emania should go forth to meet him, and, having stripped off their clothing, should stand naked in the way. This they did, and when the lad saw them, smitten with shame, he bowed his head upon the chariot-rim. Then Conor's men instantly seized him and plunged him into a vat of cold water which had been made ready, but the water boiled around him and the staves and hoops of the vat were burst asunder. This they did again and yet again, and at last his fury left him, and his natural form and aspect were restored. Then they clad him in fresh raiment and bade him in to the feast in the king's banqueting-hall.

### **The Winning of Emer**

Next day he went to the dūn of Forgall the Wily, father of Emer, and he leaped “the hero's salmon leap,” that he had learned of Skatha, over the high ramparts of the dūn. Then the mighty men of Forgall set on him, and he dealt but three blows, and each blow slew eight men, and Forgall himself

fell lifeless in leaping from the rampart of the dūn to escape Cuchulain. So he carried off Emer and her foster-sister and two loads of gold and silver. But outside the dūn the sister of Forgall raised a host against him, and his battle-fury came on him, and furious were the blows he dealt, so that the ford of Glondath ran blood and the turf on Crofot was trampled into bloody mire. A hundred he slew at every ford from Olbiny to the Boyne; and so was Emer won as she desired, and he brought her to Emain Macha and made her his wife, and they were not parted again until he died.

### **Cuchulain Champion of Erin**

A lord of Ulster named Briccriu of the Poisoned Tongue once made a feast to which he bade King Conor and all the heroes of the Red Branch, and because it was always his delight to stir up strife among men or women he set the heroes contending among themselves as to who was the champion of the land of Erin. At last it was agreed that the championship must lie among three of them, namely, Cuchulain, and Conall of the Victories and Laery the Triumphant. To decide between these three a demon named The Terrible was summoned from a lake in the depth of which he dwelt. He proposed to the heroes a test of courage. Any one of them, he said, might cut off his head to-day provided that he, the claimant of the championship, would lay down his own head for the axe to-morrow. Conall and Laery shrank from the test, but Cuchulain accepted it, and after reciting a charm over his sword, he cut off the head of the demon, who immediately rose, and taking the bleeding head in one hand and his axe in the other, plunged into the lake.

Next day he reappeared, whole and sound, to claim the fulfilment of the bargain. Cuchulain, quailing but resolute, laid his head on the block. "Stretch out your neck, wretch," cried the demon; "'tis too short for me to strike at." Cuchulain does as he is bidden. The demon swings his axe thrice over his victim, brings down the butt with a crash on the block, and then bids Cuchulain rise unhurt, Champion of Ireland and her boldest man.

## **Deirdre and the Sons of Usna**

We have now to turn to a story in which Cuchulain takes no part. It is the chief of the preliminary tales to the Cattle-spoil of Quelgny.

There was among the lords of Ulster, it is said, one named Felim son of Dall, who on a certain day made a great feast for the king. And the king came with his Druid Cathbad, and Fergus mac Roy, and many heroes of the Red Branch, and while they were making merry over the roasted flesh and wheaten cakes and Greek wine a messenger from the women's apartments came to tell Felim that his wife had just borne him a daughter. So all the lords and warriors drank health to the new-born infant, and the king bade Cathbad perform divination in the manner of the Druids and foretell what the future would have in store for Felim's babe. Cathbad gazed upon the stars and drew the horoscope of the child, and he was much troubled; and at length he said: "The infant shall be fairest among the women of Erin, and shall wed a king, but because of her shall death and ruin come upon the Province of Ulster." Then the warriors would have put her to death upon the spot, but Conor forbade them. "I will avert the doom," he said, "for she shall wed no foreign king, but she shall be my own mate when she is of age." So he took away the child, and committed it to his nurse Levarcam, and the name they gave it was Deirdre. And Conor charged Levarcam that the child should be brought up in a strong dūn in the solitude of a great wood, and that no young man should see her or she him until she was of marriageable age for the king to wed. And there she dwelt, seeing none but her nurse and Cathbad, and sometimes the king, now growing an aged man, who would visit the dūn from time to time to see that all was well with the folk there, and that his commands were observed.

One day, when the time for the marriage of Deirdre and Conor was drawing near, Deirdre and Levarcam looked over the rampart of their dūn. It was winter, a heavy snow had fallen in the night, and in the still, frosty air the trees stood up as if wrought in silver, and the green before the dūn was a sheet of unbroken white, save that in one place a scullion had killed a calf for their dinner, and the blood of the calf lay on the snow. And as Deirdre

looked, a raven lit down from a tree hard by and began to sip the blood. "O nurse," cried Deirdre suddenly, "such, and not like Conor, would be the man that I would love—his hair like the raven's wing, and in his cheek the hue of blood, and his skin as white as snow." "Thou hast pictured a man of Conor's household," said the nurse. "Who is he?" asked Deirdre. "He is Naisi, son of Usna,<sup>67</sup> a champion of the Red Branch," said the nurse. Thereupon Deirdre entreated Levarcam to bring her to speak with Naisi; and because the old woman loved the girl and would not have her wedded to the aged king, she at last agreed. Deirdre implored Naisi to save her from Conor, but he would not, till at last her entreaties and her beauty won him, and he vowed to be hers. Then secretly one night he came with his two brethren, Ardan and Ainlé, and bore away Deirdre with Levarcam, and they escaped the king's pursuit and took ship for Scotland, where Naisi took service with the King of the Picts. Yet here they could not rest, for the king got sight of Deirdre, and would have taken her from Naisi, but Naisi with his brothers escaped, and in the solitude of Glen Etive they made their dwelling by the lake, and there lived in the wild wood by hunting and fishing, seeing no man but themselves and their servants.

And the years went by and Conor made no sign, but he did not forget, and his spies told him of all that befell Naisi and Deirdre. At last, judging that Naisi and his brothers would have tired of solitude, he sent the bosom friend of Naisi, Fergus son of Roy, to bid them return, and to promise them that all would be forgiven. Fergus went joyfully, and joyfully did Naisi and his brothers hear the message, but Deirdre foresaw evil, and would fain have sent Fergus home alone. But Naisi blamed her for her doubt and suspicion, and bade her mark that they were under the protection of Fergus, whose safeguard no king in Ireland would dare to violate; and they at last made ready to go.

On landing in Ireland they were met by Baruch, a lord of the Red Branch, who had his dūn close by, and he bade Fergus to a feast he had prepared for him that night. "I may not stay," said Fergus, "for I must first convey Deirdre and the sons of Usna safely to Emain Macha." "Nevertheless," said Baruch, "thou must stay with me to-night, for it is a

*geis* for thee to refuse a feast.” Deirdre implored him not to leave them, but Fergus was tempted by the feast, and feared to break his *geis*, and he bade his two sons Illan the Fair and Buino the Red take charge of the party in his place, and he himself abode with Baruch.

And so the party came to Emain Macha, and they were lodged in the House of the Red Branch, but Conor did not receive them. After the evening meal, as he sat, drinking heavily and silently, he sent a messenger to bid Levarcam come before him. “How is it with the sons of Usna?” he said to her. “It is well,” she said. “Thou hast got the three most valorous champions in Ulster in thy court. Truly the king who has those three need fear no enemy.” “Is it well with Deirdre?” he asked. “She is well,” said the nurse, “but she has lived many years in the wildwood, and toil and care have changed her—little of her beauty of old now remains to her, O King.” Then the king dismissed her, and sat drinking again. But after a while he called to him a servant named Trendorn, and bade him go to the Red Branch House and mark who was there and what they did. But when Trendorn came the place was bolted and barred for the night, and he could not get an entrance, and at last he mounted on a ladder and looked in at a high window. And there he saw the brothers of Naisi and the sons of Fergus, as they talked or cleaned their arms, or made them ready for slumber, and there sat Naisi with a chess-board before him, and playing chess with him was the fairest of women that he had ever seen. But as he looked in wonder at the noble pair, suddenly one caught sight of him and rose with a cry, pointing to the face at the window. And Naisi looked up and saw it, and seizing a chessman from the board he hurled it at the face of the spy, and it struck out his eye. Then Trendorn hastily descended, and went back with his bloody face to the king. “I have seen them,” he cried, “I have seen the fairest woman of the world, and but that Naisi had struck my eye out I had been looking on her still.”

Then Conor arose and called for his guards and bade them bring the sons of Usna before him for maiming his messenger. And the guards went; but first Buino, son of Fergus, with his retinue, met them, and at the sword's point drove them back; but Naisi and Deirdre continued quietly to play

chess, “For,” said Naisi, “it is not seemly that we should seek to defend ourselves while we are under the protection of the sons of Fergus.” But Conor went to Buino, and with a great gift of lands he bought him over to desert his charge. Then Illan took up the defence of the Red Branch Hostel, but the two sons of Conor slew him. And then at last Naisi and his brothers seized their weapons and rushed amid the foe, and many were they who fell before the onset. Then Conor entreated Cathbad the Druid to cast spells upon them lest they should get away and become the enemies of the province, and he vowed to do them no hurt if they were taken alive. So Cathbad conjured up, as it were, a lake of slime that seemed to be about the feet of the sons of Usna, and they could not tear their feet from it, and Naisi caught up Deirdre and put her on his shoulder, for they seemed to be sinking in the slime. Then the guards and servants of Conor seized and bound them and brought them before the king. And the king called upon man after man to come forward and slay the sons of Usna, but none would obey him, till at last Owen son of Duracht and Prince of Ferney came and took the sword of Naisi, and with one sweep he shore off the heads of all three, and so they died.

Then Conor took Deirdre perforce, and for a year she abode with him in the palace in Emain Macha, but during all that time she never smiled. At length Conor said: “What is it that you hate most of all on earth, Deirdre?” And she said: “Thou thyself and Owen son of Duracht,” and Owen was standing by. “Then thou shalt go to Owen for a year,” said Conor. But when Deirdre mounted the chariot behind Owen she kept her eyes on the ground, for she would not look on those who thus tormented her; and Conor said, taunting her: “Deirdre, the glance of thee between me and Owen is the glance of a ewe between two rams.” Then Deirdre started up, and, flinging herself head foremost from the chariot, she dashed her head against a rock and fell dead.

And when they buried her it is said there grew from her grave and from Naisi's two yew-trees, whose tops, when they were full-grown, met each other over the roof of the great church of Armagh, and intertwined together, and none could part them.

## **The Rebellion of Fergus**

When Fergus mac Roy came home to Emain Macha after the feast to which Baruch bade him and found the sons of Usna slain and one of his own sons dead and the other a traitor, he broke out against Conor in a storm of wrath and cursing, and vowed to be avenged on him with fire and sword. And he went off straightway to Connacht to take service of arms with Ailell and Maev, who were king and queen of that country.

### **Queen Maev**

But though Ailell was king, Maev was the ruler in truth, and ordered all things as she wished, and took what husbands she wished, and dismissed them at pleasure; for she was as fierce and strong as a goddess of war, and knew no law but her own wild will. She was tall, it is said, with a long, pale face and masses of hair yellow as ripe corn. When Fergus came to her in her palace at Rathcroghan in Roscommon she gave him her love, as she had given it to many before, and they plotted together how to attack and devastate the Province of Ulster.

### **The Brown Bull of Quelgny**

Now it happened that Maev possessed a famous red bull with white front and horns named Finnbenach, and one day when she and Ailell were counting up their respective possessions and matching them against each other he taunted her because the Finnbenach would not stay in the hands of a woman, but had attached himself to Ailell's herd. So Maev in vexation went to her steward, mac Roth, and asked of him if there were anywhere in Erin a bull as fine as the Finnbenach. "Truly," said the steward, "there is—for the Brown Bull of Quelgny, that belongs to Dara son of Fachtna, is the mightiest beast that is in Ireland." And after that Maev felt as if she had no flocks and herds that were worth anything at all unless she possessed the Brown Bull of Quelgny. But this was in Ulster, and the Ulstermen knew the treasure they possessed, and Maev knew that they would not give up the



bull without fighting for it. So she and Fergus and Ailell agreed to make a foray against Ulster for the Brown Bull, and thus to enter into war with the province, for Fergus longed for vengeance, and Maev for fighting, for glory, and for the bull, and Ailell to satisfy Maev.

Here let us note that this contest for the bull, which is the ostensible theme of the greatest of Celtic legendary tales, the “*Tain Bo Cuailgné*,” has a deeper meaning than appears on the surface. An ancient piece of Aryan mythology is embedded in it. The Brown Bull is the Celtic counterpart of the Hindu sky-deity, Indra, represented in Hindu myth as a mighty bull, whose roaring is the thunder and who lets loose the rains “like cows streaming forth to pasture.” The advance of the Western (Connacht) host for the capture of this bull is emblematic of the onset of Night. The bull is defended by the solar hero Cuchulain, who, however, is ultimately overthrown and the bull is captured for a season. The two animals in the Celtic legend probably typify the sky in different aspects. They are described with a pomp and circumstance which shows that they are no common beasts. Once, we are told, they were swineherds of the people of Dana. “They had been successively transformed into two ravens, two sea-monsters, two warriors, two demons, two worms or animalculae, and finally into two kine.”<sup>68</sup> The Brown Bull is described as having a back broad enough for fifty children to play on; when he is angry with his keeper he stamps the man thirty feet into the ground; he is likened to a sea wave, to a bear, to a dragon, a lion, the writer heaping up images of strength and savagery. We are therefore concerned with no ordinary cattle-raid, but with a myth, the features of which are discernible under the dressing given it by the fervid imagination of the unknown Celtic bard who composed the “*Tain*,” although the exact meaning of every detail may be difficult to ascertain.

The first attempt of Maev to get possession of the bull was to send an embassy to Dara to ask for the loan of him for a year, the recompense offered being fifty heifers, besides the bull himself back, and if Dara chose to settle in Connacht he should have as much land there as he now

possessed in Ulster, and a chariot worth thrice seven *cumals*,<sup>69</sup> with the patronage and friendship of Maev.

Dara was at first delighted with the prospect, but tales were borne to him of the chatter of Maev's messengers, and how they said that if the bull was not yielded willingly it would be taken by force; and he sent back a message of refusal and defiance. "Twas known," said Maev, "the bull will not be yielded by fair means; he shall now be won by foul." And so she sent messengers around on every side to summon her hosts for the Raid.

### **The Hosting of Queen Maev**

And there came all the mighty men of Connacht—first the seven Mainés, sons of Ailell and Maev, each with his retinue; and Ket and Anluan, sons of Maga, with thirty hundreds of armed men; and yellow-haired Ferdia, with his company of Firbolgs, boisterous giants who delighted in war and in strong ale. And there came also the allies of Maev—a host of the men of Leinster, who so excelled the rest in warlike skill that they were broken up and distributed among the companies of Connacht, lest they should prove a danger to the host; and Cormac son of Conor, with Fergus mac Roy and other exiles from Ulster, who had revolted against Conor for his treachery to the sons of Usna.

### **Ulster under the Curse**

But before the host set forth towards Ulster Maev sent her spies into the land to tell her of the preparations there being made. And the spies brought back a wondrous tale, and one that rejoiced the heart of Maev, for they said that the Debility of the Ultonians<sup>70</sup> had descended on the province. Conor the king lay in pangs at Emain Macha, and his son Cuscriid in his island-fortress, and Owen Prince of Ferney was helpless as a child; Celtchar, the huge grey warrior, son of Uthecar Hornskin, and even Conall of the Victories, lay moaning and writhing on their beds, and there was no hand in Ulster that could lift a spear.

## Prophetic Voices

Nevertheless Maev went to her chief Druid, and demanded of him what her own lot in the war should be. And the Druid said only: "Whoever comes hack in safety, or comes not, thou thyself shalt come." But on her journey back she saw suddenly standing before her chariot-pole a young maiden with tresses of yellow hair that fell below her knees, and clad in a mantle of green; and with a shuttle of gold she wove a fabric upon a loom. "Who art thou, girl?" said Maev, "and what dost thou?" "I am the prophetess, Fedelma, from the Fairy Mound of Croghan," said the maid, "and I weave the four provinces of Ireland together for the foray into Ulster." "How seest thou our host?" asked Maev. "I see them all be-crimsoned, red," replied the prophetess. "Yet the Ulster heroes are all in their pangs—there is none that can lift a spear against us," said Maev. "I see the host all becrimsoned," said Fedelma. "I see a man of small stature, but the hero's light is on his brow—a stripling young and modest, but in battle a dragon; he is like unto Cuchulain of Murthemney; he doth wondrous feats with his weapons; by him your slain shall lie thickly."<sup>71</sup>

At this the vision of the weaving maiden vanished, and Maev drove homewards to Rathcroghan wondering at what she had seen and heard.

## Cuchulain Puts the Host under Geise

On the morrow the host set forth, Fergus mac Roy leading them, and as they neared the confines of Ulster he bade them keep sharp watch lest Cuchulain of Murthemney, who guarded the passes of Ulster to the south, should fall upon them unawares. Now Cuchulain and his father Sualtam<sup>72</sup> were on the borders of the province, and Cuchulain, from a warning Fergus had sent him, suspected the approach of a great host, and bade Sualtam go northwards to Emania and warn the men of Ulster. But Cuchulain himself would not stay there, for he said he had a tryst to keep with a handmaid of the wife of Laery the *bodach* (farmer), so he went into the forest, and there, standing on one leg, and using only one hand and one eye, he cut an oak

sapling and twisted it into a circular withe. On this he cut in Ogham characters how the withe was made, and he put the host of Maev under *geise* not to pass by that place till one of them had, under similar conditions, made a similar withe; “and I except my friend Fergus mac Roy,” he added, and wrote his name at the end. Then he placed the withe round the pillar-stone of Ardcullin, and went his way to keep his tryst with the handmaid.<sup>73</sup>

When the host of Maev came to Ardcullin, the withe upon the pillar-stone was found and brought to Fergus to decipher it. There was none amongst the host who could emulate the feat of Cuchulain, and so they went into the wood and encamped for the night. A heavy snowfall took place, and they were all in much distress, but next day the sun rose gloriously, and over the white plain they marched away into Ulster, counting the prohibition as extending only for one night.

### **The Ford of the Forked Pole**

Cuchulain now followed hard on their track, and as he went he estimated by the tracks they had left the number of the host at eighteen *triucha cé*t (54,000 men). Circling round the host, he now met them in front, and soon came upon two chariots containing scouts sent ahead by Maev. These he slew, each man with his driver, and having with one sweep of his sword cut a forked pole of four prongs from the wood, he drove the pole deep into a river-ford at the place called Athgowla,<sup>74</sup> and impaled on each prong a bloody head. When the host came up they wondered and feared at the sight, and Fergus declared that they were under *geise* not to pass that ford till one of them had plucked out the pole even as it was driven in, with the fingertips of one hand. So Fergus drove into the water to essay the feat, and seventeen chariots were broken under him as he tugged at the pole, but at last he tore it out; and as it was now late the host encamped upon the spot. These devices of Cuchulain were intended to delay the invaders until the Ulster men had recovered from their debility.

In the epic, as given in the Book of Leinster, and other ancient sources, a long interlude now takes place in which Fergus explains to Maev who it is

—viz., “my little pupil Setanta”—who is thus harrying the host, and his boyish deeds, some of which have been already told in this narrative, are recounted.

### **The Charioteer of Orlam**

The host proceeded on its way next day, and the next encounter with Cuchulain shows the hero in a kindlier mood. He hears a noise of timber being cut, and going into a wood he finds there a charioteer belonging to a son of Ailell and Maev cutting down chariot-poles of holly, “For,” says he, “we have damaged our chariots sadly in chasing that famous deer, Cuchulain.” Cuchulain—who, it must be remembered, was at ordinary times a slight and unimposing figure, though in battle he dilated in size and underwent a fearful distortion, symbolic of Berserker fury—helps the driver in his work. “Shall I,” he asks, “cut the poles or trim them for thee?” “Do thou the trimming,” says the driver. Cuchulain takes the poles by the tops and draws them against the set of the branches through his toes, and then runs his fingers down them the same way, and gives them over as smooth and polished as if they were planed by a carpenter. The driver stares at him. “I doubt this work I set thee to is not thy proper work,” he says. “Who art thou then at all?” “I am that Cuchulain of whom thou spakest but now.” “Surely I am but a dead man,” says the driver. “Nay,” replies Cuchulain, “I slay not drivers nor messengers nor men unarmed. But run, tell thy master Orlam that Cuchulain is about to visit him.” The driver runs off, but Cuchulain outstrips him, meets Orlam first, and strikes off his head. For a moment the host of Maev see him as he shakes this bloody trophy before them; then he disappears from sight—it is the first glimpse they have caught of their persecutor.

### **The Battle-Frenzy of Cuchulain**

A number of scattered episodes now follow. The host of Maev spreads out and devastates the territories of Bregia and of Murthemney, but they cannot

advance further into Ulster. Cuchulain hovers about them continually, slaying them by twos and threes, and no man knows where he will swoop next. Maev herself is awed when, by the bullets of an unseen slinger, a squirrel and a pet bird are killed as they sit upon her shoulders. Afterwards, as Cuchulain's wrath grows fiercer, he descends with supernatural might upon whole companies of the Connacht host, and hundreds fall at his onset. The characteristic distortion or *riastradh* which seized him in his battle-frenzy is then described. He became a fearsome and multiform creature such as never was known before. Every particle of him quivered like a bulrush in a running stream. His calves and heels and hams shifted to the front, and his feet and knees to the back, and the muscles of his neck stood out like the head of a young child. One eye was engulfed deep in his head, the other protruded, his mouth met his ears, foam poured from his jaws like the fleece of a three-year-old wether. The beats of his heart sounded like the roars of a lion as he rushes on his prey. A light blazed above his head, and "his hair became tangled about as it had been the branches of a red thorn-bush stuffed into the gap of a fence.... Taller, thicker, more rigid, longer than the mast of a great ship was the perpendicular jet of dusky blood which out of his scalp's very central point shot upwards and was there scattered to the four cardinal points, whereby was formed a magic mist of gloom resembling the smoky pall that drapes a regal dwelling, what time a king at nightfall of a winter's day draws near to it."<sup>75</sup>

Such was the imagery by which Gaelic writers conveyed the idea of superhuman frenzy. At the sight of Cuchulain in his paroxysm it is said that once a hundred of Maev's warriors fell dead from horror.

### **The Compact of the Ford**

Maev now tried to tempt him by great largesse to desert the cause of Ulster, and had a colloquy with him, the two standing on opposite sides of a glen across which they talked. She scanned him closely, and was struck by his slight and boyish appearance. She failed to move him from his loyalty to Ulster, and death descends more thickly than ever upon the Connacht host;

the men are afraid to move out for plunder save in twenties and thirties, and at night the stones from Cuchulain's sling whistle continually through the camp, braining or maiming. At last, through the mediation of Fergus, an agreement was come to. Cuchulain undertook not to harry the host provided they would only send against him one champion at a time, whom Cuchulain would meet in battle at the ford of the River Dee, which is now called the Ford of Ferdia.<sup>76</sup> While each fight was in progress the host might move on, but when it was ended they must encamp till the morrow morning. "Better to lose one man a day than a hundred," said Maev, and the pact was made.

### **Fergus and Cuchulain**

Several single combats are then narrated, in which Cuchulain is always a victor. Maev even persuades Fergus to go against him, but Fergus and Cuchulain will on no account fight each other, and Cuchulain, by agreement with Fergus, pretends to fly before him, on Fergus's promise that he will do the same for Cuchulain when required. How this pledge was kept we shall see later.

### **Capture of the Brown Bull**

During one of Cuchulain's duels with a famous champion, Natchrantal, Maev, with a third of her army, makes a sudden foray into Ulster and penetrates as far as Dunseverick, on the northern coast, plundering and ravaging as they go. The Brown Bull, who was originally at Quelgny (Co. Down), has been warned at an earlier stage by the Morrigan<sup>77</sup> to withdraw himself, and he has taken refuge, with his herd of cows, in a glen of Slievegallion, Co. Armagh. The raiders of Maev find him there, and drive him off with the herd in triumph, passing Cuchulain as they return. Cuchulain slays the leader of the escort—Buic son of Banblai—but cannot rescue the Bull, and "this," it is said, "was the greatest affront put on Cuchulain during the course of the raid."

## **The Morrigan**

The raid ought now to have ceased, for its object has been attained, but by this time the hostings of the four southern provinces<sup>78</sup> had gathered together under Maev for the plunder of Ulster, and Cuchulain remained still the solitary warder of the marches. Nor did Maev keep her agreement, for bands of twenty warriors at a time were loosed against him and he had much ado to defend himself. The curious episode of the fight with the Morrigan now occurs. A young woman clad in a mantle of many colours appears to Cuchulain, telling him that she is a king's daughter, attracted by the tales of his great exploits, and she has come to offer him her love. Cuchulain tells her rudely that he is worn and harassed with war and has no mind to concern himself with women. "It shall go hard with thee," then said the maid, "when thou hast to do with men, and I shall be about thy feet as an eel in the bottom of the Ford." Then she and her chariot vanished from his sight and he saw but a crow sitting on a branch of a tree, and he knew that he had spoken with the Morrigan.

## **The Fight with Loch**

The next champion sent against him by Maev was Loch son of Mofebis. To meet this hero it is said that Cuchulain had to stain his chin with blackberry juice so as to simulate a beard, lest Loch should disdain to do combat with a boy. So they fought in the Ford, and the Morrigan came against him in the guise of a white heifer with red ears, but Cuchulain fractured her eye with a cast of his spear. Then she came swimming up the river like a black eel and twisted herself about his legs, and ere he could rid himself of her Loch wounded him. Then she attacked him as a grey wolf, and again, before he could subdue her, he was wounded by Loch. At this his battle-fury took hold of him and he drove the Gae Bolg against Loch, splitting his heart in two. "Suffer me to rise," said Loch, "that I may fall on my face on thy side of the ford, and not backward toward the men of Erin." "It is a warrior's boon thou askest," said Cuchulain, "and it is granted." So Loch died; and a



great despondency, it is said, now fell upon Cuchulain, for he was outwearied with continued fighting, and sorely wounded, and he had never slept since the beginning of the raid, save leaning upon his spear; and he sent his charioteer, Laeg, to see if he could rouse the men of Ulster to come to his aid at last.

### **Lugh the Protector**

But as he lay at evening by the grave mound of Lerga in gloom and dejection, watching the camp-fires of the vast army encamped over against him and the glitter of their innumerable spears, he saw coming through the host a tall and comely warrior who strode impetuously forward, and none of the companies through which he passed turned his head to look at him or seemed to see him. He wore a tunic of silk embroidered with gold, and a green mantle fastened with a silver brooch; in one hand was a black shield bordered with silver and two spears in the other. The stranger came to Cuchulain and spoke gently and sweetly to him of his long toil and waking, and his sore wounds, and said in the end: "Sleep now, Cuchulain, by the grave in Lerga; sleep and slumber deeply for three days, and for that time I will take thy place and defend the Ford against the host of Maev." Then Cuchulain sank into a profound slumber and trance, and the stranger laid healing balms of magical power to his wounds so that he awoke whole and refreshed, and for the time that Cuchulain slept the stranger held the Ford against the host. And Cuchulain knew that this was Lugh his father, who had come from among the People of Dana to help his son through his hour of gloom and despair.

### **The Sacrifice of the Boy Corps**

But still the men of Ulster lay helpless. Now there was at Emain Macha a band of thrice fifty boys, the sons of all the chieftains of the provinces, who were there being bred up in arms and in noble ways, and these suffered not from the curse of Macha, for it fell only on grown men. But when they

heard of the sore straits in which Cuchulain, their playmate not long ago, was lying they put on their light armour and took their weapons and went forth for the honour of Ulster, under Conor's young son, Follaman, to aid him. And Follaman vowed that he would never return to Emania without the diadem of Ailell as a trophy. Three times they drove against the host of Maev, and thrice their own number fell before them, but in the end they were overwhelmed and slain, not one escaping alive.

### **The Carnage of Murthemney**

This was done as Cuchulain lay in his trance, and when he awoke, refreshed and well, and heard what had been done, his frenzy came upon him and he leaped into his war-chariot and drove furiously round and round the host of Maev. And the chariot ploughed the earth till the ruts were like the ramparts of a fortress, and the scythes upon its wheels caught and mangled the bodies of the crowded host till they were piled like a wall around the camp, and as Cuchulain shouted in his wrath the demons and goblins and wild things in Erin yelled in answer, so that with the terror and the uproar the host of men heaved and surged hither and thither, and many perished from each other's weapons, and many from horror and fear. And this was the great carnage, called the Carnage of Murthemney, that Cuchulain did to avenge the boy-corps of Emania; six score and ten princes were then slain of the host of Maev, besides horses and women and wolf-dogs and common folk without number. It is said that Lugh mac Ethlinn fought there by his son.

### **The Clan Calatin**

Next the men of Erin resolved to send against Cuchulain, in single combat, the Clan Calatin.<sup>79</sup> Now Calatin was a wizard, and he and his seven-and-twenty sons formed, as it were, but one being, the sons being organs of their father, and what any one of them did they all did alike. They were all poisonous, so that any weapon which one of them used would kill in nine days the man who was but grazed by it. When this multiform creature met

Cuchulain each hand of it hurled a spear at once, but Cuchulain caught the twenty-eight spears on his shield and not one of them drew blood. Then he drew his sword to lop off the spears that bristled from his shield, but as he did so the Clan Calatin rushed upon him and flung him down, thrusting his face into the gravel. At this Cuchulain gave a great cry of distress at the unequal combat, and one of the Ulster exiles, Fiacha son of Firaba, who was with the host of Maev, and was looking on at the fight, could not endure to see the plight of the champion, and he drew his sword and with one stroke he lopped off the eight-and-twenty hands that were grinding the face of Cuchulain into the gravel of the Ford. Then Cuchulain arose and hacked the Clan Calatin into fragments, so that none survived to tell Maev what Fiacha had done, else had he and his thirty hundred followers of Clan Rury been given by Maev to the edge of the sword.

### **Ferdia to the Fray**

Cuchulain had now overcome all the mightiest of Maev's men, save only the mightiest of them all after Fergus, Ferdia son of Daman. And because Ferdia was the old friend and fellow pupil of Cuchulain he had never gone out against him; but now Maev begged him to go, and he would not. Then she offered him her daughter, Findabair of the Fair Eyebrows, to wife, if he would face Cuchulain at the Ford, but he would not. At last she bade him go, lest the poets and satirists of Erin should make verses on him and put him to open shame, and then in wrath and sorrow he consented to go, and bade his charioteer make ready for to-morrow's fray. Then was gloom among all his people when they heard of that, for they knew that if Cuchulain and their master met, one of them would return alive no more.

Very early in the morning Ferdia drove to the Ford, and lay down there on the cushions and skins of the chariot and slept till Cuchulain should come. Not till it was full daylight did Ferdia's charioteer hear the thunder of Cuchulain's war-car approaching, and then he woke his master, and the two friends faced each other across the Ford. And when they had greeted each other Cuchulain said: "It is not thou, O Ferdia, who shouldst have come to

do battle with me. When we were with Skatha did we not go side by side in every battle, through every wood and wilderness? were we not heart-companions, comrades, in the feast and the assembly? did we not share one bed and one deep slumber?" But Ferdia replied: "O Cuchulain, thou of the wondrous feats, though we have studied poetry and science together, and though I have heard thee recite our deeds of friendship, yet it is my hand that shall wound thee. I bid thee remember not our comradeship, O Hound of Ulster; it shall not avail thee, it shall not avail thee."

They then debated with what weapons they should begin the fight, and Ferdia reminded Cuchulain of the art of casting small javelins that they had learned from Skatha, and they agreed to begin with these. Backwards and forwards, then, across the Ford, hummed the light javelins like bees on a summer's day, but when noonday had come not one weapon had pierced the defence of either champion. Then they took to the heavy missile spears, and now at last blood began to flow, for each champion wounded the other time and again. At last the day came to its close. "Let us cease now," said Ferdia, and Cuchulain agreed. Each then threw his arms to his charioteer, and the friends embraced and kissed each other three times, and went to their rest. Their horses were in the same paddock, their drivers warmed themselves over the same fire, and the heroes sent each other food and drink and healing herbs for their wounds.

Next day they betook themselves again to the Ford, and this time, because Ferdia had the choice of weapons the day before, he bade Cuchulain take it now.<sup>80</sup> Cuchulain chose then the heavy, broad-bladed spears for close fighting, and with them they fought from the chariots till the sun went down, and drivers and horses were weary, and the body of each hero was torn with wounds. Then at last they gave over, and threw away their weapons. And they kissed each other as before, and as before they shared all things at night, and slept peacefully till the morning.

When the third day of the combat came Ferdia wore an evil and lowering look, and Cuchulain reproached him for coming out in battle against his comrade for the bribe of a fair maiden, even Findabair, whom Maev had offered to every champion and to Cuchulain himself if the Ford

might be won thereby; but Ferdia said: "Noble Hound, had I not faced thee when summoned, my troth would be broken, and there would be shame on me in Rathcroghan." It is now the turn of Ferdia to choose the weapons, and they betake themselves to their "heavy, hard-smiting swords," and though they hew from each other's thighs and shoulders great cantles of flesh, neither can prevail over the other, and at last night ends the combat. This time they parted from each other in heaviness and gloom, and there was no interchange of friendly acts, and their drivers and horses slept apart. The passions of the warriors had now risen to a grim sternness.

### **Death of Ferdia**

On the fourth day Ferdia knew the contest would be decided, and he armed himself with especial care. Next his skin was a tunic of striped silk bordered with golden spangles, and over that hung an apron of brown leather. Upon his belly he laid a flat stone, large as a millstone, and over that a strong, deep apron of iron, for he dreaded that Cuchulain would use the Gae Bolg that day. And he put on his head his crested helmet studded with carbuncle and inlaid with enamels, and girt on his golden-hilted sword, and on his left arm hung his broad shield with its fifty bosses of bronze. Thus he stood by the Ford, and as he waited he tossed up his weapons and caught them again and did many wonderful feats, playing with his mighty weapons as a juggler plays with apples; and Cuchulain, watching him, said to Laeg, his driver: "If I give ground to-day, do thou reproach and mock me and spur me on to valour, and praise and hearten me if I do well, for I shall have need of all my courage."

"O Ferdia," said Cuchulain when they met, "what shall be our weapons to-day?" "It is thy choice to-day," said Ferdia. "Then let it be all or any," said Cuchulain, and Ferdia was cast down at hearing this, but he said, "So be it," and thereupon the fight began. Till midday they fought with spears, and none could gain any advantage over the other. Then Cuchulain drew his sword and sought to smite Ferdia over the rim of his shield; but the giant Firbolg flung him off. Thrice Cuchulain leaped high into the air, seeking to

strike Ferdia over his shield, but each time as he descended Ferdia caught him upon the shield and flung him off like a little child into the Ford. And Laeg mocked him, crying: "He casts thee off as a river flings its foam, he grinds thee as a millstone grinds a corn of wheat; thou elf, never call thyself a warrior."

Then at last Cuchulain's frenzy came upon him, and he dilated giant-like, till he overtopped Ferdia, and the hero-light blazed about his head. In close contact the two were interlocked, whirling and trampling, while the demons and goblins and unearthly things of the glens screamed from the edges of their swords, and the waters of the Ford recoiled in terror from them, so that for a while they fought on dry land in the midst of the riverbed. And now Ferdia found Cuchulain a moment off his guard, and smote him with the edge of the sword, and it sank deep into his flesh, and all the river ran red with his blood. And he pressed Cuchulain sorely after that, hewing and thrusting so that Cuchulain could endure it no longer, and he shouted to Laeg to fling him the Gae Bolg. When Ferdia heard that he lowered his shield to guard himself from below, and Cuchulain drove his spear over the rim of the shield and through his breastplate into his chest. And Ferdia raised his shield again, but in that moment Cuchulain seized the Gae Bolg in his toes and drove it upward against Ferdia, and it pierced through the iron apron and burst in three the millstone that guarded him, and deep into his body it passed, so that every crevice and cranny of him was filled with its barbs. "Tis enough," cried Ferdia; "I have my death of that. It is an ill deed that I fall by thy hand, O Cuchulain." Cuchulain seized him as he fell, and carried him northward across the Ford, that he might die on the further side of it, and not on the side of the men of Erin. Then he laid him down, and a faintness seized Cuchulain, and he was falling, when Laeg cried: "Rise up, Cuchulain, for the host of Erin will be upon us. No single combat will they give after Ferdia has fallen." But Cuchulain said: "Why should I rise again, O my servant, now he that lieth here has fallen by my hand?" and he fell in a swoon like death. And the host of Maev with tumult and rejoicing, with tossing of spears and shouting of war-songs, poured across the border into Ulster.

But before they left the Ford they took the body of Ferdia and laid it in a grave, and built a mound over him and set up a pillar-stone with his name and lineage in Ogham. And from Ulster came certain of the friends of Cuchulain, and they bore him away into Murthemney, where they washed him and bathed his wounds in the streams, and his kin among the Danaan folk cast magical herbs into the rivers for his healing. But he lay there in weakness and in stupor for many days.

### **The Rousing of Ulster**

Now Sualtam, the father of Cuchulain, had taken his son's horse, the Grey of Macha, and ridden off again to see if by any means he might rouse the men of Ulster to defend the province. And he went crying abroad: "The men of Ulster are being slain, the women carried captive, the kine driven!" Yet they stared on him stupidly, as though they knew not of what he spake. At last he came to Emania, and there were Cathbad the Druid and Conor the King, and all their nobles and lords, and Sualtam cried aloud to them: "The men of Ulster are being slain, the women carried captive, the kine driven; and Cuchulain alone holds the gap of Ulster against the four provinces of Erin. Arise and defend yourselves!" But Cathbad only said: "Death were the due of him who thus disturbs the King"; and Conor said: "Yet it is true what the man says"; and the lords of Ulster wagged their heads and murmured: "True indeed it is."

Then Sualtam wheeled round his horse in anger and was about to depart when, with a start which the Grey made, his neck fell against the sharp rim of the shield upon his back, and it shore off his head, and the head fell on the ground. Yet still it cried its message as it lay, and at last Conor bade put it on a pillar that it might be at rest. But it still went on crying and exhorting, and at length into the clouded mind of the king the truth began to penetrate, and the glazed eyes of the warriors began to glow, and slowly the spell of Macha's curse was lifted from their minds and bodies. Then Conor arose and swore a mighty oath, saying: "The heavens are above us and the earth beneath us, and the sea is round about us; and surely, unless the

heavens fall on us and the earth gape to swallow us up, and the sea overwhelm the earth, I will restore every woman to her hearth, and every cow to its byre.”<sup>81</sup> His Druid proclaimed that the hour was propitious, and the king bade his messengers go forth on every side and summon Ulster to arms, and he named to them warriors long dead as well as the living, for the cloud of the curse still lingered in his brain.

With the curse now departed from them the men of Ulster flocked joyfully to the summons, and on every hand there was grinding of spears and swords, and buckling on of armour and harnessing of war-chariots for the rising-out of the province.<sup>82</sup> One host came under Conor the King and Keltchar, son of Uthecar Hornskin, from Emania southwards, and another from the west along the very track of the host of Maev. And Conor's host fell upon eight score of the men of Erin in Meath, who were carrying away a great booty of women-captives, and they slew every man of the eight score and rescued the women. Maev and her host then fell back toward Connacht, but when they reached Slemon Midi, the Hill of Slane, in Meath, the Ulster bands joined each other there and prepared to give battle. Maev sent her messenger mac Roth to view the Ulster host on the Plain of Garach and report upon it. Mac Roth came back with an awe-striking description of what he beheld. When he first looked he saw the plain covered with deer and other wild beasts. These, explains Fergus, had been driven out of the forests by the advancing host of the Ulster men. The second time mac Roth looked he saw a mist that filled the valleys, the hill-tops standing above it like islands. Out of the mist there came thunder and flashes of light, and a wind that nearly threw him off his feet. “What is this?” asks Maev, and Fergus tells her that the mist is the deep breathing of the warriors as they march, and the light is the flashing of their eyes, and the thunder is the clangour of their war-cars and the clash of their weapons as they go to the fight: “They think they will never reach it,” says Fergus. “We have warriors to meet them,” says Maev. “You will need that,” says Fergus, “for in all Ireland, nay, in all the Western world, to Greece and Scythia and the Tower of Bregon<sup>83</sup> and the Island of Gades, there live not who can face the men of Ulster in their wrath.”



A long passage then follows describing the appearance and equipment of each of the Ulster chiefs.

## **The Battle of Garach**

The battle was joined on the Plain of Garach, in Meath. Fergus, wielding a two-handed sword, the sword which, it was said, when swung in battle made circles like the arch of a rainbow, swept down whole ranks of the Ulster men at each blow,<sup>84</sup> and the fierce Maeve charged thrice into the heart of the enemy.

Fergus met Conor the King, and smote him on his golden-bordered shield, but Cormac, the king's son, begged for his father's life. Fergus then turned on Conall of the Victories.

“Too hot art thou,” said Conall, “against thy people and thy race for a wanton.”<sup>85</sup> Fergus then turned from slaying the Ulstermen, but in his battle-fury he smote among the hills with his rainbow-sword, and struck off the tops of the three *Maela* of Meath, so that they are flat-topped (*mael*) to this day.

Cuchulain in his stupor heard the crash of Fergus's blows, and coming slowly to himself he asked of Laeg what it meant. “It is the sword-play of Fergus,” said Laeg. Then he sprang up, and his body dilated so that the wrappings and swathings that had been bound on him flew off, and he armed himself and rushed into the battle. Here he met Fergus. “Turn hither, Fergus,” he shouted; “I will wash thee as foam in a pool, I will go over thee as the tail goes over a cat, I will smite thee as a mother smites her infant.” “Who speaks thus to me?” cried Fergus. “Cuchulain mac Sualtam; and now do thou avoid me as thou art pledged.”<sup>86</sup>

“I have promised even that,” said Fergus, and then went out of the battle, and with him the men of Leinster and the men of Munster, leaving Maeve with her seven sons and the hosting of Connacht alone.

It was midday when Cuchulain came into the fight; when the evening sun was shining through the leaves of the trees his war-chariot was but two wheels and a handful of shattered ribs, and the host of Connacht was in full

flight towards the border. Cuchulain overtook Maev, who crouched under her chariot and entreated grace. "I am not wont to slay women," said Cuchulain, and he protected her till she had crossed the Shannon at Athlone.

### **The Fight of the Bulls**

But the Brown Bull of Quelgny, that Maev had sent into Connacht by a circuitous way, met the white-horned Bull of Ailell on the Plain of Aei, and the two beasts fought; but the Brown Bull quickly slew the other, and tossed his fragments about the land so that pieces of him were strewn from Rathcroghan to Tara; and then careered madly about till he fell dead, bellowing and vomiting black gore, at the Ridge of the Bull, between Ulster and Iveagh. Ailell and Maev made peace with Ulster for seven years, and the Ulster men returned home to Emain Macha with great glory.

Thus ends the "Tain Bo Cuailgne," or Cattle Raid of Quelgny; and it was written out in the "Book of Leinster" in the year 1150 by the hand of Finn mac Gorman, Bishop of Kildare, and at the end is written: "A blessing on all such as faithfully shall recite the 'Tain' as it stands here, and shall not give it in any other form."

### **Cuchulain in Fairyland**

One of the strangest tales in Celtic legend tells how Cuchulain, as he lay asleep after hunting, against a pillar-stone, had a vision of two Danaan women who came to him armed with rods and alternately beat him till he was all but dead, and he could not lift a hand to defend himself. Next day, and for a year thereafter, he lay in sore sickness, and none could heal him.

Then a man whom none knew came and told him to go to the pillar-stone where he had seen the vision, and he would learn what was to be done for his recovery. There he found a Danaan woman in a green mantle, one of those who had chastised him, and she told him that Fand, the Pearl of Beauty, wife of Mananan the Sea-god, had set her love on him; and she was

at enmity with her husband Mananan; and her realm was besieged by three demon kings, against whom Cuchulain's help was sought, and the price of his help would be the love of Fand. Laeg, the charioteer, was then sent by Cuchulain to report upon Fand and her message. He entered Fairyland, which lies beyond a lake across which he passed in a magic boat of bronze, and came home with a report of Fand's surpassing beauty and the wonders of the kingdom; and Cuchulain then betook himself thither. Here he had a battle in a dense mist with the demons, who are described as resembling sea-waves—no doubt we are to understand that they are the folk of the angry husband, Mananan. Then he abode with Fand, enjoying all the delights of Fairyland for a month, after which he bade her farewell, and appointed a trysting-place on earth, the Strand of the Yew Tree, where she was to meet him.

### **Fand, Emer, and Cuchulain**

But Emer heard of the tryst; and though not commonly disturbed at Cuchulain's numerous infidelities, she came on this occasion with fifty of her maidens armed with sharp knives to slay Fand. Cuchulain and Fand perceive their chariots from afar, and the armed angry women with golden clasps shining on their breasts, and he prepares to protect his mistress. He addresses Emer in a curious poem, describing the beauty and skill and magical powers of Fand—"There is nothing the spirit can wish for that she has not got." Emer replies: "In good sooth, the lady to whom thou dost cling seems in no way better than I am, but the new is ever sweet and the well-known is sour; thou hast all the wisdom of the time, Cuchulain! Once we dwelled in honour together, and still might dwell if I could find favour in thy sight." "By my word thou dost," said Cuchulain, "and shalt find it so long as I live."

"Give me up," then said Fand. But Emer said: "Nay, it is more fitting that I be the deserted one." "Not so," said Fand; "it is I who must go." "And an eagerness for lamentation seized upon Fand, and her soul was great within her, for it was shame for her to be deserted and straightway to return

to her home; moreover, the mighty love that she bore to Cuchulain was tumultuous in her.”<sup>87</sup>

But Mananan, the Son of the Sea, knew of her sorrow and her shame, and he came to her aid, none seeing him but she alone, and she welcomed him in a mystic song. “Wilt thou return to me?” said Mananan, “or abide with Cuchulain?” “In truth,” said Fand, “neither of ye is better or nobler than the other, but I will go with thee, Mananan, for thou hast no other mate worthy of thee, but that Cuchulain has in Emer.”

So she went to Mananan, and Cuchulain, who did not see the god, asked Laeg what was happening. “Fand,” he replied, “is going away with the Son of the Sea, since she hath not been pleasing in thy sight.”

Then Cuchulain bounded into the air and fled from the place, and lay a long time refusing meat and drink, until at last the Druids gave him a draught of forgetfulness; and Mananan, it is said, shook his cloak between Cuchulain and Fand, so that they might meet no more throughout eternity.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Vengeance of Maev**

Though Maev made peace with Ulster after the battle of Garech she vowed the death of Cuchulain for all the shame and loss he had brought upon her and on her province, and she sought how she might take her vengeance upon him.

Now the wife of the wizard Calatin, whom Cuchulain slew at the Ford, brought forth, after her husband's death, six children at a birth, namely, three sons and three daughters. Misshapen, hideous, poisonous, born for evil were they; and Maev, hearing of these, sent them to learn the arts of magic, not in Ireland only, but in Alba; and even as far as Babylon they went to seek for hidden knowledge, and they came back mighty in their craft, and she loosed them against Cuchulain.

### **Cuchulain and Blainid**

Besides the Clan Calatin, Cuchulain had also other foes, namely Ere, the King of Ireland, son to Cairpre, whom Cuchulain had slain in battle, and Lewy son of Curoi, King of Munster.<sup>89</sup> For Curoi's wife, Blanid, had set her love on Cuchulain, and she bade him come and take her from Curoi's dūn, and watch his time to attack the dūn, when he would see the stream that flowed from it turn white. So Cuchulain and his men waited in a wood hard by till Blanid judged that the time was fit, and she then poured into the stream the milk of three cows. Then Cuchulain attacked the dūn, and took it by surprise, and slew Curoi, and bore away the woman. But Fercartna, the bard of Curoi, went with them and showed no sign, till, finding himself near Blanid as she stood near the cliff-edge of Beara, he flung his arms round her, and leaped with her over the cliff, and so they perished, and Curoi was avenged upon his wife.

All these now did Maev by secret messages and by taunts and exhortations arouse against Cuchulain, and they waited till they heard that the curse of Macha was again heavy on the men of Ulster, and then they assembled a host and marched to the Plain of Murthemney.

### **The Madness of Cuchulain**

And first the Children of Calatin caused a horror and a despondency to fall upon the mind of Cuchulain, and out of the hooded thistles and puff-balls and fluttering leaves of the forest they made the semblance of armed battalions marching against Murthemney, and Cuchulain seemed to see on every side the smoke of burning dwellings going up. And for two days he did battle with the phantoms till he was sick and wearied out. Then Cathbad and the men of Ulster persuaded him to retire to a solitary glen, where fifty of the princesses of Ulster, and among them Niam, wife of his faithful friend Conall of the Victories, tended him, and Niam made him vow that he would not leave the dūn where he was until she gave him leave.

But still the Children of Calatin filled the land with apparitions of war, and smoke and flames went up, and wild cries and wailings with chattering, goblin laughter and the braying of trumpets and horns were borne upon the

winds. And Bave, Calatin's daughter, went into the glen, and, taking the form of a handmaid of Niam, she beckoned her away and led her to a distance among the woods and put a spell of straying on her so that she was lost and could find her way home no more. Bave then went in the form of Niam to Cuchulain and bade him up and rescue Ulster from the hosts that were harrying it, and the Morrigan came in the form of a great crow where Cuchulain sat with the women, and croaked of war and slaughter. Then Cuchulain sprang up and called Laeg to harness his chariot. But when Laeg sought for the Grey of Macha to harness him, the horse fled from him, and resisted, and only with great difficulty could Laeg yoke him in the chariot, while large tears of dark blood trickled down his face.

Then Cuchulain, having armed himself, drove forth; and on every side shapes and sounds of dread assailed him and clouded his mind, and then it appeared to him that he saw a great smoke, lit with bursts of red flame, over the ramparts of Emain Macha, and he thought he saw the corpse of Emer tossed out over the ramparts. But when he came to his dūn at Murthemney, there was Emer living, and she entreated him to leave the phantoms alone, but he would not listen to her, and he bade her farewell. Then he bade farewell to his mother Dectera, and she gave him a goblet of wine to drink, but ere he could drink it the wine turned to blood, and he flung it away, saying, "My life's end is near; this time I shall not return alive from the battle." And Dectera and Cathbad besought him to await the coming of Conall of the Victories, who was away on a journey, but he would not.

### **The Washer at the Ford**

When he came to the ford upon the plain of Emania he saw there kneeling by the stream as it were a young maiden, weeping and wailing, and she washed a heap of bloody raiment and warlike arms in the stream, and when she raised a dripping vest or corselet from the water Cuchulain saw that they were his own. And as they crossed the ford she vanished from their sight.<sup>90</sup>

## Clan Calatin Again

Then, having taken his leave of Conor and of the womenfolk in Emania, he turned again towards Murthemney and the foe. But on his way he saw by the roadside three old crones, each blind of one eye, hideous and wretched, and they had made a little fire of sticks, and over it they were roasting a dead dog on spits of rowan wood. As Cuchulain passed they called to him to alight and stay with them and share their food. "That will I not, in sooth," said he. "Had we a great feast," they said, "thou wouldst soon have stayed; it doth not become the great to despise the small." Then Cuchulain, because he would not be thought discourteous to the wretched, lighted down, and he took a piece of the roast and ate it, and the hand with which he took it was stricken up to the shoulder so that its former strength was gone. For it was *geis* to Cuchulain to approach a cooking hearth and take food from it, and it was *geis* to him to eat of his namesake.<sup>91</sup>

## Death of Cuchulain

Near to Slieve Fuad, south of Armagh, Cuchulain found the host of his enemies, and drove furiously against them, plying the champion's "thunder-feat" upon them until the plain was strewn with their dead. Then a satirist, urged on by Lewy, came near him and demanded his spear.<sup>92</sup> "Have it, then," said Cuchulain, and flung it at him with such force that it went clean through him and killed nine men beyond. "A king will fall by that spear," said the Children of Calatin to Lewy, and Lewy seized it and flung it at Cuchulain, but it smote Laeg, the king of charioteers, so that his bowels fell out on the cushions of the chariot, and he bade farewell to his master and he died.

Then another satirist demanded the spear, and Cuchulain said: "I am not bound to grant more than one request on one day." But the satirist said: "Then I will revile Ulster for thy default," and Cuchulain flung him the spear as before, and Ere now got it, and this time in flying back it struck the Grey of Macha with a mortal wound. Cuchulain drew out the spear from the

horse's side, and they bade each other farewell, and the Grey galloped away with half the yoke hanging to its neck.

And a third time Cuchulain flung the spear to a satirist, and Lewy took it again and flung it back, and it struck Cuchulain, and his bowels fell out in the chariot, and the remaining horse, Black Sainglend, broke away and left him.

“I would fain go as far as to that loch-side to drink,” said Cuchulain, knowing the end was come, and they suffered him to go when he had promised to return to them again. So he gathered up his bowels into his breast and went to the loch-side, and drank, and bathed himself, and came forth again to die. Now there was close by a tall pillar-stone that stood westwards of the loch, and he went up to it and slung his girdle over it and round his breast, so that he might die in his standing and not in his lying down; and his blood ran down in a little stream into the loch, and an otter came out of the loch and lapped it. And the host gathered round, but feared to approach him while the life was still in him, and the hero-light shone above his brow. Then came the Grey of Macha to protect him, scattering his foes with biting and kicking.

And then came a crow and settled on his shoulder.

Lewy, when he saw this, drew near and pulled the hair of Cuchulain to one side over his shoulder, and with his sword he smote off his head; and the sword fell from Cuchulain's hand, and smote off the hand of Lewy as it fell. They took the hand of Cuchulain in revenge for this, and bore the head and hand south to Tara, and there buried them, and over them they raised a mound. But Conall of the Victories, hastening to Cuchulain's side on the news of the war, met the Grey of Macha streaming with blood, and together they went to the loch-side and saw him headless and bound to the pillar-stone, and the horse came and laid its head on his breast. Conall drove southwards to avenge Cuchulain, and he came on Lewy by the river Liffey, and because Lewy had but one hand Conall tied one of his behind his back, and for half the day they fought, but neither could prevail. Then came Conall's horse, the Dewy-Red, and tore a piece out of Lewy's side, and Conall slew him, and took his head, and returned to Emain Macha. But they



made no show of triumph in entering the city, for Cuchulain the Hound of Ulster was no more.

### **The Recovery of the Tain**

The history of the “Tain,” or Cattle Raid, of Quelgny was traditionally supposed to have been written by no other than Fergus mac Roy, but for a long time the great lay or saga was lost. It was believed to have been written out in Ogham characters on staves of wood, which a bard who possessed them had taken with him into Italy, whence they never returned.

The recovery of the “Tain” was the subject of a number of legends which Sir S. Ferguson, in his “Lays of the Western Gael,” has combined in a poem of so much power, so much insight into the spirit of Gaelic myth, that I venture to reproduce much of it here in telling this singular and beautiful story. It is said that after the loss of the “Tain” Sanchan Torpest, chief bard of Ireland, was once taunted at a feast by the High King Guary on his inability to recite the most famous and splendid of Gaelic poems. This touched the bard to the quick, and he resolved to recover the lost treasure. Far and wide through Erin and through Alba he searched for traces of the lay, but could only recover scattered fragments. He would have conjured up by magic arts the spirit of Fergus to teach it to him, even at the cost of his own life—for such, it seems, would have been the price demanded for the intervention and help of the dead—but the place of Fergus's grave, where the spells must be said, could not be discovered. At last Sanchan sent his son Murgan with his younger brother Eimena to journey to Italy and endeavour to discover there the fate of the staff-book. The brothers set off on their journey.

“Eastward, breadthwise, over Erin straightway travell'd forth  
the twain,  
Till with many days' wayfaring Murgan fainted by Loch Ein:

‘Dear my brother, thou art weary: I for present aid am flown:  
Thou for my returning tarry here beside this Standing Stone.’

“Shone the sunset red and solemn: Murgan, where he  
leant, observed

Down the corners of the column letter-strokes of Ogham  
carved.

“’Tis, belike, a burial pillar,’ said he, ‘and these shallow lines  
Hold some warrior’s name of valour, could I rightly spell the  
signs.’

“Letter then by letter tracing, soft he breathed the sound of  
each;

Sound and sound then interlacing, lo, the signs took form of  
speech;

And with joy and wonder mainly thrilling, part a-thrill with  
fear,

Murgan read the legend plainly, ‘FERGUS SON OF ROY IS  
HERE.’”

Murgan then, though he knew the penalty, appealed to Fergus to pity a  
son’s distress, and vowed, for the sake of the recovery of the “Tain,” to give  
his life, and abandon his kin and friends and the maiden he loves, so that his  
father might no more be shamed. But Fergus gave no sign, and Murgan  
tried another plea:

“Still he stirs not. Love of women thou regard’st not, Fergus,  
now:

Love of children, instincts human, care for these no more  
hast thou:

Wider comprehension, deeper insights to the dead belong:—  
Since for Love thou wak’st not, Sleeper, yet awake for sake  
of Song.

“ ‘Thou, the first in rhythmic cadence dressing life’s  
discordant tale,

Wars of chiefs and loves of maidens, gavest the Poem to the

Gael;

Now they've lost their noblest measure, and in dark days  
hard at hand,

Song shall be the only treasure left them in their native land.'

"Fergus rose. A mist ascended with him, and a flash was  
seen

As of brazen sandals blended with a mantle's wafture green;  
But so thick the cloud closed o'er him, Eimena, return'd at  
last,

Found not on the field before him but a mist-heap grey and  
vast.

"Thrice to pierce the hoar recesses faithful Eimena essay'd;  
Thrice through foggy wildernesses back to open air he  
stray'd;

Till a deep voice through the vapours fill'd the twilight far  
and near

And the Night her starry tapers kindling, stoop'd from  
heaven to hear.

"Seem'd as though the skiey Shepherd back to earth had cast  
the fleece

Envyng gods of old caught upward from the darkening  
shrines of Greece;

So the white mists curl'd and glisten'd, to from heaven's  
expanses bare,

Stars enlarging lean'd and listen'd down the emptied depths  
of air.

"All night long by mists surrounded Murgan lay in vapoury  
bars;

All night long the deep voice sounded 'neath the keen,  
enlarging stars:

But when, on the orient verges, stars grew dim and mists  
retired,  
Rising by the stone of Fergus, Murgan stood a man inspired.

“ ‘Back to Sanchan!—Father, hasten, ere the hour of power  
be past,  
Ask not how obtain'd but listen to the lost lay found at last!’  
‘Yea, these words have tramp of heroes in them; and the  
marching rhyme  
Rolls the voices of the eras down the echoing steeps of  
Time.’

“Not till all was thrice related, thrice recital full essay'd,  
Sad and shamefaced, worn and faded, Murgan sought the  
faithful maid.  
‘Ah, so haggard; ah, so altered; thou in life and love so  
strong!’  
‘Dearly purchased,’ Murgan falter'd, ‘life and love I've sold  
for song!’

“ ‘Woe is me, the losing bargain! what can song the dead  
avail?’  
‘Fame immortal,’ murmur'd Murgan, ‘long as lay delights  
the Gael.’  
‘Fame, alas! the price thou chargest not repays one virgin  
tear.’  
‘Yet the proud revenge I've purchased for my sire, I deem  
not dear.’

“ ‘So, again to Gort the splendid, when the drinking boards  
were spread,  
Sanchan, as of old attended, came and sat at table-head.  
‘Bear the cup to Sanchan Torpest: twin gold goblets, Bard,  
are thine,

If with voice and string thou harpest, *Tain-Bo-Cuailgne*, line  
for line.’

“ ‘Yea, with voice and string I’ll chant it. Murgan to his  
father’s knee  
Set the harp: no prelude wanted, Sanchan struck the master  
key,  
And, as bursts the brimful river all at once from caves of  
Cong,  
Forth at once, and once for ever, leap’d the torrent of the  
song.

“Floating on a brimful torrent, men go down and banks go  
by:  
Caught adown the lyric current, Guary, captured, ear and  
eye,  
Heard no more the courtiers jeering, saw no more the walls  
of Gort,  
Creeve Roe’s<sup>93</sup> meads instead appearing, and Emania’s royal  
fort.

“Vision chasing splendid vision, Sanchan roll’d the rhythmic  
scene;  
They that mock’d in lewd derision now, at gaze, with  
wondering mien  
Sate, and, as the glorying master sway’d the tightening reins  
of song,  
Felt emotion’s pulses faster—fancies faster bound along.

“Pity dawn’d on savage faces, when for love of captive  
Crunn,  
Macha, in the ransom-races, girt her gravid loins, to run  
’Gainst the fleet Ultonian horses; and, when Deirdra on the  
road

Headlong dash'd her 'mid the corses, brimming eyelids  
overflow'd.

“Light of manhood's generous ardour, under brows relaxing  
shone,  
When, mid-ford, on Uladh's border, young Cuchullin stood  
alone,  
Maev and all her hosts withstanding:— ‘Now, for love of  
knightly play,  
Yield the youth his soul's demanding; let the hosts their  
marchings stay,

“‘Till the death he craves be given; and, upon his burial stone  
Champion-praises duly graven, make his name and glory  
known;  
For, in speech-containing token, age to ages never gave  
Salutation better spoken, than, “Behold a hero's grave.””

“What, another and another, and he still or combat calls?  
Ah, the lot on thee, his brother sworn in arms, Ferdia, falls;  
And the hall with wild applauses sobb'd like woman ere they  
wist,  
When the champions in the pauses of the deadly combat  
kiss'd.

“Now, for love of land and cattle, while Cuchullin in the  
fords  
Stays the march of Connaught's battle, ride and rouse the  
Northern Lords;  
Swift as angry eagles wing them toward the plunder'd eyrie's  
call,  
Thronging from Dun Dealga bring them, bring them from  
the Red Branch hall!

“Heard ye not the tramp of armies? Hark! amid the sudden  
gloom,  
'Twas the stroke of Conall's war-mace sounded through the  
startled room;  
And, while still the hall grew darker, king and courtier chill'd  
with dread,  
Heard the rattling of the war-car of Cuchullin overhead.

“Half in wonder, half in terror, loth to stay and loth to fly,  
Seem'd to each beglamour'd hearer shades of kings went  
thronging by:  
But the troubled joy of wonder merged at last in mastering  
fear,  
As they heard through pealing thunder, ‘Fergus son of Roy is  
here!’

“Brazen-sandall'd, vapour-shrouded, moving in an icy blast,  
Through the doorway terror-crowded, up the tables Fergus  
pass'd:—  
‘Stay thy hand, oh harper, pardon! cease the wild unearthly  
lay!  
Murgen, bear thy sire his guerdon.’ Murgen sat, a shape of  
clay.

“ ‘Bear him on his bier beside me: never more in halls of  
Gort  
Shall a niggard king deride me: slaves, of Sanchan make  
their sport!  
But because the maiden's yearnings needs must also be  
condoled,  
Hers shall be the dear-bought earnings, hers the twin-bright  
cups of gold.’

“ ‘Cups,’ she cried, ‘of bitter drinking, fling them far as arm  
can throw!’

Let them in the ocean sinking, out of sight and memory go!  
Let the joinings of the rhythm, let the links of sense and  
sound

Of the *Tain-Bo* perish with them, lost as though they'd ne'er  
been found!’

“So it comes, the lay, recover'd once at such a deadly cost,  
Ere one full recital suffer'd, once again is all but lost:  
For, the maiden's malediction still with many a blemish-stain  
Clings in coarser garb of fiction round the fragments that  
remain.”

### **The Phantom Chariot of Cuchulain**

Cuchulain, however, makes an impressive reappearance in a much later legend of Christian origin, found in the twelfth-century “Book of the Dun Cow.” He was summoned from Hell, we are told, by St. Patrick to prove the truths of Christianity and the horrors of damnation to the pagan monarch, Laery mac Neill, King of Ireland. Laery, with St. Benen, a companion of Patrick, are standing on the Plain of mac Indoc when a blast of icy wind nearly takes them off their feet. It is the wind of Hell, Benen explains, after its opening before Cuchulain. Then a dense mist covers the plain, and anon a huge phantom chariot with galloping horses, a grey and a black, loom up through the mist. Within it are the famous two, Cuchulain and his charioteer, giant figures, armed with all the splendour of the Gaelic warrior.

Cuchulain then talks to Laery, and urges him to “believe in God and in holy Patrick, for it is not a demon that has come to thee, but Cuchulain son of Sualtam.” To prove his identity he recounts his famous deeds of arms, and ends by a piteous description of his present state:

“What I suffered of trouble,  
O Laery, by sea and land—



Yet more severe was a single night  
When the demon was wrathful!  
Great as was my heroism,  
Hard as was my sword,  
The devil crushed me with one finger  
Into the red charcoal!”

He ends by beseeching Patrick that heaven may be granted to him, and the legend tells that the prayer was granted and that Laery believed.

### **Death of Conor mac Nessa**

Christian ideas have also gathered round the end of Cuchulain's lord, King Conor of Ulster. The manner of his death was as follows: An unjust and cruel attack had been made by him on Mesgedra, King of Leinster, in which that monarch met his death at the hand of Conall of the Victories.<sup>94</sup> Conall took out the brains of the dead king and mingled them with lime to make a sling-stone—such “brain balls,” as they were called, being accounted the most deadly of missiles. This ball was laid up in the king's treasure-house at Emain Macha, where the Connacht champion, Ket son of Maga, found it one day when prowling in disguise through Ulster. Ket took it away and kept it always by him. Not long thereafter the Connacht men took a spoil of cattle from Ulster, and the Ulster men, under Conor, overtook them at a river-ford still called Athnurchar (The Ford of the Sling-cast), in Westmeath. A battle was imminent, and many of the ladies of Connacht came to their side of the river to view the famous Ultonian warriors, and especially Conor, the stateliest man of his time. Conor was willing to show himself, and seeing none but women on the other bank he drew near them; but Ket, who was lurking in ambush, now rose and slung the brain-ball at Conor, striking him full in the forehead. Conor fell, and was carried off by his routed followers. When they got him home, still living, to Emain Macha, his physician, Fingen, pronounced that if the ball were extracted from his head he must die; it was accordingly sewn up with golden thread,

and the king was bidden to keep himself from horse-riding and from all vehement passion and exertion, and he would do well.

Seven years afterwards Conor saw the sun darken at noonday, and he summoned his Druid to tell him the cause of the portent. The Druid, in a magic trance, tells him of a hill in a distant land on which stand three crosses with a human form nailed to each of them, and one of them is like the Immortals. "Is he a malefactor?" then asks Conor. "Nay," says the Druid, "but the Son of the living God," and he relates to the king the story of the death of Christ. Conor breaks out in fury, and drawing his sword he hacks at the oak-trees in the sacred grove, crying, "Thus would I deal with his enemies," when with the excitement and exertion the brain-ball bursts from his head, and he falls dead. And thus was the vengeance of Mesgedra fulfilled. With Conor and with Cuchulain the glory of the Red Branch and the dominance of Ulster passed away. The next, or Ossianic, cycle of Irish legend brings upon the scene different characters, different physical surroundings, and altogether different ideals of life.

### **Ket and the Boar of mac Dathó**

The Connacht champion Ket, whose main exploit was the wounding of King Conor at Ardnurchar, figures also in a very dramatic tale entitled "The Carving of mac Dathó's Boar." The story runs as follows:

Once upon a time there dwelt in the province of Leinster a wealthy hospitable lord named Mesroda, son of Dathó. Two possessions had he; namely, a hound which could outrun every other hound and every wild beast in Erin, and a boar which was the finest and greatest in size that man had ever beheld.

Now the fame of this hound was noised all about the land, and many were the princes and lords who longed to possess it. And it came to pass that Conor King of Ulster and Maev Queen of Connacht sent messengers to mac Dathó to ask him to sell them the hound for a price, and both the messengers arrived at the dūn of mac Dathó on the same day. Said the Connacht messenger: "We will give thee in exchange for the hound six

hundred milch cows, and a chariot with two horses, the best that are to be found in Connacht, and at the end of a year thou shalt have as much again.” And the messenger of King Conor said: “We will give no less than Connacht, and the friendship and alliance of Ulster, and that will be better for thee than the friendship of Connacht.”

Then Mesroda mac Dathó fell silent, and for three days he would not eat or drink, nor could he sleep o' nights, but tossed restlessly on his bed. His wife observed his condition, and said to him: “Thy fast hath been long, Mesroda, though good food is by thee in plenty; and at night thou turnest thy face to the wall, and well I know thou dost not sleep. What is the cause of thy trouble?”

“There is a saying,” replied Mac Dathó, “Trust not a thrall with money, nor a woman with a secret.”

“When should a man talk to a woman,” said his wife, “but when something were amiss? What thy mind cannot solve perchance another's may.”

Then mac Dathó told his wife of the request for his hound both from Ulster and from Connacht at one and the same time. “And whichever of them I deny,” he said, “they will harry my cattle and slay my people.”

“Then hear my counsel,” said the woman. “Give it to both of them, and bid them come and fetch it; and if there be any harrying to be done, let them even harry each other; but in no way mayest thou keep the hound.”

Mac Dathó followed this wise counsel, and bade both Ulster and Connacht to a great feast on the same day, saying to each of them that they could have the hound afterwards.

So on the appointed day Conor of Ulster, and Maev, and their retinues of princes and mighty men assembled at the dūn of mac Dathó. There they found a great feast set forth, and to provide the chief dish mac Dathó had killed his famous boar, a beast of enormous size. The question now arose as to who should have the honourable task of carving it, and Bricriu of the Poisoned Tongue characteristically, for the sake of the strife which he loved, suggested that the warriors of Ulster and Connacht should compare their principal deeds of arms, and give the carving of the boar to him who

seemed to have done best in the border-fighting which was always going on between the provinces. After much bandying of words and of taunts Ket son of Maga arises and stands over the boar, knife in hand, challenging each of the Ulster lords to match his deeds of valour. One after another they arise, Cuscrí son of Conor, Keltchar, Moonremur, Laery the Triumphant, and others—Cuchulain is not introduced in this story—and in each case Ket has some biting tale to tell of an encounter in which he has come off better than they, and one by one they sit down shamed and silenced. At last a shout of welcome is heard at the door of the hall and the Ulstermen grow jubilant: Conall of the Victories has appeared on the scene. He strides up to the boar, and Ket and he greet each other with chivalrous courtesy:

“And now welcome to thee, O Conall, thou of the iron heart and fiery blood; keen as the glitter of ice, ever-victorious chieftain; hail, mighty son of Finnchóom!” said Ket.

And Conall said: “Hail to thee, Ket, flower of heroes, lord of chariots, a raging sea in battle; a strong, majestic bull; hail, son of Maga!”

“And now,” went on Conall, “rise up from the boar and give me place.”

“Why so?” replied Ket.

“Dost thou seek a contest from me?” said Conall. “Verily thou shalt have it. By the gods of my nation I swear that since I first took weapons in my hand I have never passed one day that I did not slay a Connacht man, nor one night that I did not make a foray on them, nor have I ever slept but I had the head of a Connacht man under my knee.”

“I confess,” then said Ket, “that thou art a better man than I, and I yield thee the boar. But if Anluan my brother were here, he would match thee deed for deed, and sorrow and shame it is that he is not.”

“Anluan is here,” shouted Conall, and with that he drew from his girdle the head of Anluan and dashed it in the face of Ket.

Then all sprang to their feet and a wild shouting and tumult arose, and the swords flew out of themselves, and battle raged in the hall of mac Dathó. Soon the hosts burst out through the doors of the dún and smote and slew each other in the open field, until the Connacht host were put to flight. The hound of mac Dathó pursued the chariot of King Ailell of Connacht till

the charioteer smote off its head, and so the cause of contention was won by neither party, and mac Dathó lost his hound, but saved his lands and life.

### **The Death of Ket**

The death of Ket is told in Keating's "History of Ireland." Returning from a foray in Ulster, he was overtaken by Conall at the place called the Ford of Ket, and they fought long and desperately. At last Ket was slain, but Conall of the Victories was in little better case, and lay bleeding to death when another Connacht champion named Beálcu<sup>95</sup> found him. "Kill me," said Conall to him, "that it be not said I fell at the hand of *one* Connacht man." But Beálcu said: "I will not slay a man at the point of death, but I will bring thee home and heal thee, and when thy strength is come again thou shalt fight with me in single combat." Then Beálcu put Conall on a litter and brought him home, and had him tended till his wounds were healed.

The three sons of Beálcu, however, when they saw what the Ulster champion was like in all his might, resolved to assassinate him before the combat should take place. By a stratagem Conall contrived that they slew their own father instead; and then, taking the heads of the three sons, he went back, victoriously as he was wont, to Ulster.

### **The Death of Maev**

The tale of the death of Queen Maev is also preserved by Keating. Fergus mac Roy having been slain by Ailell with a cast of a spear as he bathed in a lake with Maev, and Ailell having been slain by Conall, Maev retired to an island<sup>96</sup> on Loch Ryve, where she was wont to bathe early every morning in a pool near to the landing-place. Forbay son of Conor mac Nessa, having discovered this habit of the queen's, found means one day to go unperceived to the pool and to measure the distance from it to the shore of the mainland. Then he went back to Emania, where he measured out the distance thus obtained, and placing an apple on a pole at one end he shot at it continually with a sling until he grew so good a marksman at that distance that he never

missed his aim. Then one day, watching his opportunity by the shores of Loch Ryve, he saw Maev enter the water, and putting a bullet in his sling he shot at her with so good an aim that he smote her in the centre of the forehead and she fell dead.

The great warrior-queen had reigned in Connacht, it was said, for eighty-eight years. She is a signal example of the kind of women whom the Gaelic bards delighted to portray. Gentleness and modesty were by no means their usual characteristics, but rather a fierce overflowing life. Women-warriors like Skatha and Aifa are frequently met with, and one is reminded of the Gaulish women, with their mighty snow-white arms, so dangerous to provoke, of whom classical writers tell us. The Gaelic bards, who in so many ways anticipated the ideas of chivalric romance, did not do so in setting women in a place apart from men. Women were judged and treated like men, neither as drudges nor as goddesses, and we know that well into historic times they went with men into battle, a practice only ended in the sixth century.

### **Fergus mac Leda and the Wee Folk**

Of the stories of the Ultonian Cycle which do not centre on the figure of Cuchulain, one of the most interesting is that of Fergus mac Leda and the King of the Wee Folk. In this tale Fergus appears as King of Ulster, but as he was contemporary with Conor mac Nessa, and in the Cattle Raid of Quelgny is represented as following him to war, we must conclude that he was really a sub-king, like Cuchulain or Owen of Ferney.

The tale opens in Faylinn, or the Land of the Wee Folk, the elves presenting an amusing parody of human institutions on a reduced scale, but endowed with magical powers. Iubdan,<sup>97</sup> the King of Faylinn, when flushed with wine at a feast, is bragging of the greatness of his power and the invincibility of his armed forces—have they not the strong man Glower, who with his axe has been known to hew down a thistle at a stroke? But the king's bard, Eisirt, has heard something of a giant race oversea in a land called Ulster, one man of whom would annihilate a whole battalion of the

Wee Folk, and he incautiously allows himself to hint as much to the boastful monarch. He is immediately clapped into prison for his audacity, and only gets free by promising to go immediately to the land of the mighty men, and bring back evidence of the truth of his incredible story.

So off he goes; and one fine day King Fergus and his lords find at the gate of their Dūn a tiny little fellow magnificently clad in the robes of a royal bard, who demands entrance. He is borne in upon the hand of Æda, the king's dwarf and bard, and after charming the court by his wise and witty sayings, and receiving a noble largesse, which he at once distributes among the poets and other court attendants of Ulster, he goes off home, taking with him as a guest the dwarf Æda, before whom the Wee Folk fly as a "Fomorian giant," although, as Eisirt explains, the average man of Ulster can carry him like a child. Iubdan is now convinced, but Eisirt puts him under *geise*, the bond of chivalry which no Irish chieftain can repudiate without being shamed, to go himself, as Eisirt has done, to the palace of Fergus and taste the king's porridge. Iubdan, after he has seen Æda, is much dismayed, but he prepares to go, and bids Bebo, his wife, accompany him. "You did an ill deed," she says, "when you condemned Eisirt to prison; but surely there is no man under the sun that can make thee hear reason."

So off they go, and Iubdan's fairy steed bears them over the sea till they reach Ulster, and by midnight they stand before the king's palace. "Let us taste the porridge as we were bound," says Bebo, "and make off before daybreak." They steal in and find the porridge-pot, to the rim of which Iubdan can only reach by standing on his horse's back. In straining downwards to get at the porridge he overbalances himself and falls in. There in the thick porridge he sticks fast, and there Fergus's scullions find him at the break of day, with the faithful Bebo lamenting. They bear him off to Fergus, who is amazed at finding another wee man, with a woman too, in his palace. He treats them hospitably, but refuses all appeals to let them go. The story now recounts in a spirit of broad humour several Rabelaisian adventures in which Bebo is concerned, and gives a charming poem supposed to have been uttered by Iubdan in the form of advice to Fergus's

fire-gillie as to the merits for burning of different kinds of timber. The following are extracts:

“Burn not the sweet apple-tree of drooping branches, of the white blossoms, to whose gracious head each man puts forth his hand.”

“Burn not the noble willow, the unfailing ornament of poems; bees drink from its blossoms, all delight in the graceful tent.”

“The delicate, airy tree of the Druids, the rowan with its berries, this burn; but avoid the weak tree, burn not the slender hazel.”

“The ash-tree of the black buds burn not—timber that speeds the wheel, that yields the rider his switch; the ashen spear is the scale-beam of battle.”

At last the Wee Folk come in a great multitude to beg the release of Iubdan. On the king's refusal they visit the country with various plagues, snipping off the ears of corn, letting the calves suck all the cows dry, defiling the wells, and so forth; but Fergus is obdurate. In their quality as earth-gods, *dei terreni*, they promise to make the plains before the palace of Fergus stand thick with corn every year without ploughing or sowing, but all is vain. At last, however, Fergus agrees to ransom Iubdan against the best of his fairy treasures, so Iubdan recounts them—the cauldron that can never be emptied, the harp that plays of itself; and finally he mentions a pair of water-shoes, wearing which a man can go over or under water as freely as on dry land. Fergus accepts the shoes, and Iubdan is released.

### **The Blemish of Fergus**



But it is hard for a mortal to get the better of Fairyland—a touch of hidden malice lurks in magical gifts, and so it proved now. Fergus was never tired of exploring the depths of the lakes and rivers of Ireland; but one day, in Loch Rury, he met with a hideous monster, the *Muirdris*, or river-horse, which inhabited that lake, and from which he barely saved himself by flying to the shore. With the terror of this encounter his face was twisted awry; but since a blemished man could not hold rule in Ireland, his queen and nobles took pains, on some pretext, to banish all mirrors from the palace, and kept the knowledge of his condition from him. One day, however, he smote a bondmaid with a switch, for some negligence, and the maid, indignant, cried out: “It were better for thee, Fergus, to avenge thyself on the river-horse that hath twisted thy face than to do brave deeds on women!” Fergus bade fetch him a mirror, and looked in it. “It is true,” he said; “the river-horse of Loch Rury has done this thing.”

### **Death of Fergus**

The conclusion may be given in the words of Sir Samuel Ferguson's fine poem on this theme. Fergus donned the magic shoes, took sword in hand, and went to Loch Rury:

“For a day and night  
Beneath the waves he rested out of sight,  
But all the Ultonians on the bank who stood  
Saw the loch boil and redden with his blood.  
When next at sunrise skies grew also red  
He rose—and in his hand the *Muirdris*' head.  
Gone was the blemish! On his goodly face  
Each trait symmetric had resumed its place:  
And they who saw him marked in all his mien  
A king's composure, ample and serene.  
He smiled; he cast his trophy to the bank,  
Said, 'I, survivor, Ulstermen!' and sank.”

This fine tale has been published in full from an Egerton MS., by Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady, in his "Silva Gadelica." The humorous treatment of the fairy element in the story would mark it as belonging to a late period of Irish legend, but the tragic and noble conclusion unmistakably signs it as belonging to the Ulster bardic literature, and it falls within the same order of ideas, if it were not composed within the same period, as the tales of Cuchulain.

### **Significance of Irish Place-Names**

Before leaving this great cycle of legendary literature let us notice what has already, perhaps, attracted the attention of some readers—the extent to which its chief characters and episodes have been commemorated in the still surviving place-names of the country.<sup>98</sup> This is true of Irish legend in general—it is especially so of the Ultonian Cycle. Faithfully indeed, through many a century of darkness and forgetting, have these names pointed to the hidden treasures of heroic romance which the labours of our own day are now restoring to light. The name of the little town of Ardee, as we have seen,<sup>99</sup> commemorates the tragic death of Ferdia at the hand of his "heart companion," the noblest hero of the Gael. The ruins of Dūn Baruch, where Fergus was bidden to the treacherous feast, still look over the waters of Moyle, across which Naisi and Deirdre sailed to their doom. Ardnurchar, the Hill of the Sling-cast, in Westmeath,<sup>100</sup> brings to mind the story of the stately monarch, the crowd of gazing women, and the crouching enemy with the deadly missile which bore the vengeance of Mesgedra. The name of Armagh, or Ard Macha, the Hill of Macha, enshrines the memory of the Fairy Bride and her heroic sacrifice, while the grassy rampart can still be traced where the war-goddess in the earlier legend drew its outline with the pin of her brooch when she founded the royal fortress of Ulster. Many pages might be filled with these instances. Perhaps no modern country has place-names so charged with legendary associations as are those of Ireland. Poetry and myth are there still closely wedded to the very soil of the land—a fact in which there lies ready to hand an agency for education, for

inspiration, of the noblest kind, if we only had the insight to see it and the art to make use of it.

# **Tales of the Ossianic Cycle**

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## **The Fianna of Erin**

As the tales of the Ultonian Cycle cluster round the heroic figure of the Hound of Cullan, so do those of the Ossianic Cycle round that of Finn mac Cumhal,<sup>101</sup> whose son Oisín<sup>102</sup> (or Ossian, as Macpherson called him in the pretended translations from the Gaelic which first introduced him to the English-speaking world) was a poet as well as a warrior, and is the traditional author of most of them. The events of the Ultonian Cycle are supposed to have taken place about the time of the birth of Christ. Those of the Ossianic Cycle fell mostly in the reign of Cormac mac Art, who lived in the third century A.D. During his reign the Fianna of Erin, who are represented as a kind of military Order composed mainly of the members of two clans, Clan Bascna and Clan Morna, and who were supposed to be devoted to the service of the High King and to the repelling of foreign invaders, reached the height of their renown under the captaincy of Finn.

The annalists of ancient Ireland treated the story of Finn and the Fianna, in its main outlines, as sober history. This it can hardly be. Ireland had no foreign invaders during the period when the Fianna are supposed to have flourished, and the tales do not throw a ray of light on the real history of the country; they are far more concerned with a Fairyland populated by supernatural beings, beautiful or terrible, than with any tract of real earth inhabited by real men and women. The modern critical reader of these tales will soon feel that it would be idle to seek for any basis of fact in this glittering mirage. But the mirage was created by poets and storytellers of such rare gifts for this kind of literature that it took at once an extraordinary hold on the imagination of the Irish and Scottish Gael.

## **The Ossianic Cycle**

The earliest tales of this cycle now extant are found in manuscripts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and were composed probably a couple of centuries earlier. But the cycle lasted in a condition of vital growth for a thousand years, right down to Michael Comyn's "Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth," which was composed about 1750, and which ended the long history of Gaelic literature.<sup>103</sup> It has been estimated<sup>104</sup> that if all the tales and poems of the Ossianic Cycle which still remain could be printed they would fill some twenty-five volumes the size of this. Moreover, a very great proportion of this literature, even if there were no manuscripts at all, could during the last and the preceding centuries have been recovered from the lips of what has been absurdly called an "illiterate" peasantry in the Highlands and in the Gaelic-speaking parts of Ireland. It cannot but interest us to study the character of the literature which was capable of exercising such a spell.

### **Contrasted with the Ultonian Cycle**

Let us begin by saying that the reader will find himself in an altogether different atmosphere from that in which the heroes of the Ultonian Cycle live and move. Everything speaks of a later epoch, when life was gentler and softer, when men lived more in settlements and towns, when the Danaan Folk were more distinctly fairies and less deities, when in literature the elements of wonder and romance predominated, and the iron string of heroism and self-sacrifice was more rarely sounded. There is in the Ossianic literature a conscious delight in wild nature, in scenery, in the song of birds, the music of the chase through the woods, in mysterious and romantic adventure, which speaks unmistakably of a time when the free, open-air life "under the greenwood tree" is looked back on and idealised, but no longer habitually lived, by those who celebrate it. There is also a significant change of *locale*. The Conorian tales were the product of a literary movement having its sources among the bleak hills or on the stern rock-bound coasts of Ulster. In the Ossianic Cycle we find ourselves in the Midlands or South of Ireland. Much of the action takes place amid the soft

witchery of the Killarney landscape, and the difference between the two regions is reflected in the ethical temper of the tales.

In the Ultonian Cycle it will have been noticed that however extravagantly the supernatural element may be employed, the final significance of almost every tale, the end to which all the supernatural machinery is worked, is something real and human, something that has to do with the virtues or vices, the passions or the duties of men and women. In the Ossianic Cycle, broadly speaking, this is not so. The nobler vein of literature seems to have been exhausted, and we have now beauty for the sake of beauty, romance for the sake of romance, horror or mystery for the sake of the excitement they arouse. The Ossianic tales are, at their best,

“Lovely apparitions, sent To be a moment's ornament.”

They lack that something, found in the noblest art as in the noblest personalities, which has power “to warn, to comfort, and command.”

### **The Coming of Finn**

King Cormac mac Art was certainly a historical character, which is more, perhaps, than we can say of Conor mac Nessa. Whether there is any real personage behind the glorious figure of his great captain, Finn, it is more difficult to say. But for our purpose it is not necessary to go into this question. He was a creation of the Celtic mind in one land and in one stage of its development, and our part here is to show what kind of character the Irish mind liked to idealise and make stories about.

Finn, like most of the Irish heroes, had a partly Danaan ancestry. His mother, Murna of the White Neck, was grand-daughter of Nuada of the Silver Hand, who had wedded that Ethlinn, daughter of Balor the Fomorian, who bore the Sun-god Lugh to Kian. Cumhal son of Trenmōr was Finn's father. He was chief of the Clan Bascna, who were contending with the Clan Morna for the leadership of the Fianna, and was overthrown and slain by these at the battle of Knock.<sup>105</sup>

Among the Clan Morna was a man named Lia, the lord of Luachar in Connacht, who was Treasurer of the Fianna, and who kept the Treasure Bag, a bag made of crane's skin and having in it magic weapons and jewels of great price that had come down from the days of the Danaans. And he became Treasurer to the Clan Morna and still kept the bag at Rath Luachar.

Murna, after the defeat and death of Cumhal, took refuge in the forests of Slieve Bloom,<sup>106</sup> and there she bore a man-child whom she named Demna. For fear that the Clan Morna would find him out and slay him, she gave him to be nurtured in the wildwood by two aged women, and she herself became wife to the King of Kerry. But Demna, when he grew up to be a lad, was called "Finn," or the Fair One, on account of the whiteness of his skin and his golden hair, and by this name he was always known thereafter. His first deed was to slay Lia, who had the Treasure Bag of the Fianna, which he took from him. He then sought out his uncle Crimmal, who, with a few other old men, survivors of the chiefs of Clan Bascna, had escaped the sword at Castleknock, and were living in much penury and affliction in the recesses of the forests of Connacht. These he furnished with a retinue and guard from among a body of youths who followed his fortunes, and gave them the Treasure Bag. He himself went to learn the accomplishments of poetry and science from an ancient sage and Druid named Finegas, who dwelt on the river Boyne. Here, in a pool of this river, under boughs of hazel from which dropped the Nuts of Knowledge on the stream, lived Fintan the Salmon of Knowledge, which whoso ate of him would enjoy all the wisdom of the ages. Finegas had sought many a time to catch this salmon, but failed until Finn had come to be his pupil. Then one day he caught it, and gave it to Finn to cook, bidding him eat none of it himself, but to tell him when it was ready. When the lad brought the salmon, Finegas saw that his countenance was changed. "Hast thou eaten of the salmon?" he asked. "Nay," said Finn, "but when I turned it on the spit my thumb was burnt, and I put it to my mouth." "Take the Salmon of Knowledge and eat it," then said Finegas, "for in thee the prophecy is come true. And now go hence, for I can teach thee no more."

After that Finn became as wise as he was strong and bold, and it is said that whenever he wished to divine what would befall, or what was happening at a distance, he had but to put his thumb in his mouth and bite it, and the knowledge he wished for would be his.

## **Finn and the Goblin**

At this time Goll son of Morna was the captain of the Fianna of Erin, but Finn, being come to man's estate, wished to take the place of his father Cumhal. So he went to Tara, and during the Great Assembly, when no man might raise his hand against any other in the precincts of Tara, he sat down among the king's warriors and the Fianna. At last the king marked him as a stranger among them, and bade him declare his name and lineage. "I am Finn son of Cumhal," said he, "and I am come to take service with thee, O King, as my father did." The king accepted him gladly, and Finn swore loyal service to him. No long time after that came the period of the year when Tara was troubled by a goblin or demon that came at nightfall and blew fire-balls against the royal city, setting it in flames, and none could do battle with him, for as he came he played on a harp a music so sweet that each man who heard it was lapped in dreams, and forgot all else on earth for the sake of listening to that music. When this was told to Finn he went to the king and said: "Shall I, if I slay the goblin, have my father's place as captain of the Fianna?" "Yea, surely," said the king, and he bound himself to this by an oath.

Now there were among the men-at-arms an old follower of Finn's father, Cumhal, who possessed a magic spear with a head of bronze and rivets of Arabian gold. The head was kept laced up in a leathern case; and it had the property that when the naked blade was laid against the forehead of a man it would fill him with a strength and a battle-fury that would make him invincible in every combat. This spear the man Fiacha gave to Finn, and taught him how to use it, and with it he awaited the coming of the goblin on the ramparts of Tara. As night fell and mists began to gather in the wide plain around the Hill he saw a shadowy form coming swiftly towards him,



and heard the notes of the magic harp. But laying the spear to his brow he shook off the spell, and the phantom fled before him to the Fairy Mound of Slieve Fuad, and there Finn overtook and slew him, and bore back his head to Tara.

Then Cormac the King set Finn before the Fianna, and bade them all either swear obedience to him as their captain or seek service elsewhere. And first of all Goll mac Morna swore service, and then all the rest followed, and Finn became Captain of the Fianna of Erin, and ruled them till he died.

### **Finn's Chief Men: Conan mac Lia**

With the coming of Finn the Fianna of Erin came to their glory, and with his life their glory passed away. For he ruled them as no other captain ever did, both strongly and wisely, and never bore a grudge against any, but freely forgave a man all offences save disloyalty to his lord. Thus it is told that Conan, son of the lord of Luachar, him who had the Treasure Bag and whom Finn slew at Rath Luachar, was for seven years an outlaw and marauder, harrying the Fians and killing here a man and there a hound, and firing dwellings, and raiding their cattle. At last they ran him to a corner at Carn Lewy, in Munster, and when he saw that he could escape no more he stole upon Finn as he sat down after a chase, and flung his arms round him from behind, holding him fast and motionless. Finn knew who held him thus, and said: "What wilt thou, Conan?" Conan said: "To make a covenant of service and fealty with thee, for I may no longer evade thy wrath." So Finn laughed and said: "Be it so, Conan, and if thou prove faithful and valiant I also will keep faith." Conan served him for thirty years, and no man of all the Fianna was keener and hardier in fight.

### **Conan mac Morna**

There was also another Conan, namely, mac Morna, who was big and bald, and unwieldy in manly exercises, but whose tongue was bitter and

scurrilous; no high or brave thing was done that Conan the Bald did not mock and belittle. It is said that when he was stripped he showed down his back and buttocks a black sheep's fleece instead of a man's skin, and this is the way it came about. One day when Conan and certain others of the Fianna were hunting in the forest they came to a stately dūn, white-walled, with coloured thatching on the roof, and they entered it to seek hospitality. But when they were within they found no man, but a great empty hall with pillars of cedar-wood and silken hangings about it, like the hall of a wealthy lord. In the midst there was a table set forth with a sumptuous feast of boar's flesh and venison, and a great vat of yew-wood full of red wine, and cups of gold and silver. So they set themselves gaily to eat and drink, for they were hungry from the chase, and talk and laughter were loud around the board. But one of them ere long started to his feet with a cry of fear and wonder, and they all looked round, and saw before their eyes the tapestried walls changing to rough wooden beams, and the ceiling to foul sooty thatch like that of a herdsman's hut. So they knew they were being entrapped by some enchantment of the Fairy Folk, and all sprang to their feet and made for the doorway, that was no longer high and stately, but was shrinking to the size of a fox earth—all but Conan the Bald, who was gluttonously devouring the good things on the table, and heeded nothing else. Then they shouted to him, and as the last of them went out he strove to rise and follow, but found himself limed to the chair so that he could not stir. So two of the Fianna, seeing his plight, rushed back and seized his arms and tugged with all their might, and as they dragged him away they left the most part of his raiment and his skin sticking to the chair. Then, not knowing what else to do with him in his sore plight, they clapped upon his back the nearest thing they could find, which was the skin of a black sheep that they took from a peasant's flock hard by, and it grew there, and Conan wore it till his death.

Though Conan was a coward and rarely adventured himself in battle with the Fianna, it is told that once a good man fell by his hand. This was on the day of the great battle with the pirate horde on the Hill of Slaughter in Kerry.<sup>107</sup> For Liagan, one of the invaders, stood out before the hosts and challenged the bravest of the Fians to single combat, and the Fians in

mockery thrust Conan forth to the fight. When he appeared Liagan laughed, for he had more strength than wit, and he said: "Silly is thy visit, thou bald old man." And as Conan still approached Liagan lifted his hand fiercely, and Conan said: "Truly thou art in more peril from the man behind than from the man in front." Liagan looked round; and in that instant Conan swept off his head, and then threw his sword and ran for shelter to the ranks of the laughing Fians. But Finn was very wroth because he had won the victory by a trick.

### **Dermot O'Dyna**

And one of the chiefest of the friends of Finn was Dermot of the Love Spot. He was so fair and noble to look on that no woman could refuse him love, and it was said that he never knew weariness, but his step was as light at the end of the longest day of battle or the chase as it was at the beginning. Between him and Finn there was great love, until the day when Finn, then an old man, was to wed Grania, daughter of Cormac the High King; but Grania bound Dermot by the sacred ordinances of the Fian chivalry to fly with her on her wedding night, which thing, sorely against his will, he did, and thereby got his death. But Grania went back to Finn, and when the Fianna saw her they laughed through all the camp in bitter mockery, for they would not have given one of the dead man's fingers for twenty such as Grania.

### **Keelta mac Ronan and Oisín**

Another of the chief men that Finn had was Keelta mac Ronan, who was one of his house-stewards, and a strong warrior as well as a golden-tongued reciter of tales and poems. And there was Oisín, the son of Finn, the greatest poet of the Gael, of whom more shall be told hereafter.

### **Oscar**

Oisīn had a son, Oscar, who was the fiercest fighter in battle among all the Fians. He slew in his maiden battle three kings, and in his fury he also slew by mischance his own friend and condisciple Linné. His wife was the fair Aideen, who died of grief after Oscar's death in the battle of Gowra, and Oisīn buried her on Ben Edar (Howth), and raised over her the great dolmen which is there to this day. Oscar appears in this literature as a type of hard strength, with a heart “like twisted horn sheathed in steel,” a character made as purely for war as a sword or spear.

### **Geena mac Luga**

Another good man that Finn had was Geena, the son of Luga; his mother was the warrior-daughter of Finn, and his father was a near kinsman of hers. He was nurtured by a woman that bore the name of Fair Mane, who had brought up many of the Fianna to manhood. When his time to take arms was come he stood before Finn and made his covenant of fealty, and Finn gave him the captaincy of a band. But mac Luga proved slothful and selfish, for ever vaunting himself and his weapon-skill, and never training his men to the chase of deer or boar, and he used to beat his hounds and his serving-men. At last the Fians under him came with their whole company to Finn at Loch Lena, in Killarney, and there they laid their complaint against mac Luga, and said: “Choose now, O Finn, whether you will have us or the son of Luga by himself.”

Then Finn sent to mac Luga and questioned him, but mac Luga could say nothing to the point as to why the Fianna would none of him. Then Finn taught him the things befitting a youth of noble birth and a captain of men, and they were these:

### **Maxims of the Fianna**

“Son of Luga, if armed service be thy design, in a great man's household be quiet, be surly in the narrow pass.

“Without a fault of his beat not thy hound; until thou ascertain her guilt, bring not a charge against thy wife.

“In battle meddle not with a buffoon, for, O mac Luga, he is but a fool.

“Censure not any if he be of grave repute; stand not up to take part in a brawl; have naught to do with a madman or a wicked one.

“Two-thirds of thy gentleness be shown to women and to those that creep on the floor (little children) and to poets, and be not violent to the common people.

“Utter not swaggering speech, nor say thou wilt not yield what is right; it is a shameful thing to speak too stiffly unless that it be feasible to carry out thy words.

“So long as thou shalt live, thy lord forsake not; neither for gold nor for other reward in the world abandon one whom thou art pledged to protect.

“To a chief do not abuse his people, for that is no work for a man of gentle blood.

“Be no tale-bearer, nor utterer of falsehoods; be not talkative nor rashly censorious. Stir not up strife against thee, however good a man thou be.

“Be no frequenter of the drinking-house, nor given to carping at the old; meddle not with a man of mean estate.

“Dispense thy meat freely; have no niggard for thy familiar.

“Force not thyself upon a chief, nor give him cause to speak ill of thee.

“Stick to thy gear; hold fast to thy arms till the stern fight with its weapon-glitter be ended.

“Be more apt to give than to deny, and follow after gentleness, O son of Luga.”

And the son of Luga, it is written, heeded these counsels, and gave up his bad ways, and he became one of the best of Finn's men.

## **Character of Finn**

Suchlike things also Finn taught to all his followers, and the best of them became like himself in valour and gentleness and generosity. Each of them loved the repute of his comrades more than his own, and each would say

that for all noble qualities there was no man in the breadth of the world worthy to be thought of beside Finn.

It was said of him that “he gave away gold as if it were the leaves of the woodland, and silver as if it were the foam of the sea”; and that whatever he had bestowed upon any man, if he fell out with him afterwards, he was never known to bring it against him.

The poet Oisín once sang of him to St. Patrick:

“These are the things that were dear to Finn—  
The din of battle, the banquet's glee,  
The bay of his hounds through the rough glen ringing,  
And the blackbird singing in Letter Lee,

“The shingle grinding along the shore  
When they dragged his war-boats down to sea,  
The dawn wind whistling his spears among,  
And the magic song of his minstrels three.”

### **Tests of the Fianna**

In the time of Finn no one was ever permitted to be one of the Fianna of Erin unless he could pass through many severe tests of his worthiness. He must be versed in the Twelve Books of Poetry, and must himself be skilled to make verse in the rime and metre of the masters of Gaelic poesy. Then he was buried to his middle in the earth, and must, with a shield and a hazel stick, there defend himself against nine warriors casting spears at him, and if he were wounded he was not accepted. Then his hair was woven into braids, and he was chased through the forest by the Fians. If he were overtaken, or if a braid of his hair were disturbed, or if a dry stick cracked under his foot, he was not accepted. He must be able to leap over a lath level with his brow, and to run at full speed under one level with his knee, and he must be able while running to draw out a thorn from his foot and never slacken speed. He must take no dowry with a wife.

## **Keelta and St. Patrick**

It was said that one of the Fians, namely, Keelta, lived on to a great age, and saw St. Patrick, by whom he was baptized into the faith of the Christ, and to whom he told many tales of Finn and his men, which Patrick's scribe wrote down. And once Patrick asked him how it was that the Fianna became so mighty and so glorious that all Ireland sang of their deeds, as Ireland has done ever since. Keelta answered: "Truth was in our hearts and strength in our arms, and what we said, that we fulfilled."

This was also told of Keelta after he had seen St. Patrick and received the Faith. He chanced to be one day by Leyney, in Connacht, where the Fairy Folk of the Mound of Duma were wont to be sorely harassed and spoiled every year by pirates from oversea. They called Keelta to their aid, and by his counsel and valour the invaders were overcome and driven home; but Keelta was sorely wounded. Then Keelta asked that Owen, the seer of the Fairy Folk, might foretell him how long he had to live, for he was already a very aged man. Owen said: "It will be seventeen years, O Keelta of fair fame, till thou fall by the pool of Tara, and grievous that will be to all the king's household." "Even so did my chief and lord, my guardian and loving protector, Finn, foretell to me," said Keelta. "And now what fee will ye give me for my rescue of you from the worst affliction that ever befell you?" "A great reward," said the Fairy Folk, "even youth; for by our art we shall change you into a young man again with all the strength and activity of your prime." "Nay, God forbid," said Keelta, "that I should take upon me a shape of sorcery, or any other than that which my Maker, the true and glorious God, hath bestowed upon me." And the Fairy Folk said: "It is the word of a true warrior and hero, and the thing that thou sayest is good." So they healed his wounds, and every bodily evil that he had, and he wished them blessing and victory, and went his way.

## **The Birth of Oisín**

One day, as Finn and his companions and dogs were returning from the chase to their dūn on the Hill of Allen, a beautiful fawn started up on their path, and the chase swept after her, she taking the way which led to their home. Soon all the pursuers were left far behind save only Finn himself and his two hounds Bran and Skolawn. Now these hounds were of strange breed; for Tyren, sister to Murna, the mother of Finn, had been changed into a hound by the enchantment of a woman of the Fairy Folk, who loved Tyren's husband Ullan; and the two hounds of Finn were the children of Tyren, born to her in that shape. Of all hounds in Ireland they were the best, and Finn loved them much, so that it was said he wept but twice in his life, and once was for the death of Bran.

At last, as the chase went on down a valley-side, Finn saw the fawn stop and lie down, while the two hounds began to play round her, and to lick her face and limbs. So he gave commandment that none should hurt her, and she followed them to the Dūn of Allen, playing with the hounds as she went.

The same night Finn awoke and saw standing by his bed the fairest woman his eyes had ever beheld.

"I am Saba, O Finn," she said, "and I was the fawn ye chased to-day. Because I would not give my love to the Druid of the Fairy Folk, who is named the Dark, he put that shape upon me by his sorceries, and I have borne it these three years. But a slave of his, pitying me, once revealed to me that if I could win to thy great Dūn of Allen, O Finn, I should be safe from all enchantments, and my natural shape would come to me again. But I feared to be torn in pieces by thy dogs, or wounded by thy hunters, till at last I let myself be overtaken by thee alone and by Bran and Skolawn, who have the nature of man and would do me no hurt." "Have no fear, maiden," said Finn; "we, the Fianna, are free, and our guest-friends are free; there is none who shall put compulsion on you here."

So Saba dwelt with Finn, and he made her his wife; and so deep was his love for her that neither the battle nor the chase had any delight for him, and for months he never left her side. She also loved him as deeply, and their joy in each other was like that of the Immortals in the Land of Youth. But at



last word came to Finn that the warships of the Northmen were in the Bay of Dublin, and he summoned his heroes to the fight; "For," said he to Saba, "the men of Erin give us tribute and hospitality to defend them from the foreigner, and it were shame to take it from them and not to give that to which we, on our side, are pledged." And he called to mind that great saying of Goll mac Morna when they were once sore bested by a mighty host. "A man," said Goll, "lives after his life, but not after his honour."

Seven days was Finn absent, and he drove the Northmen from the shores of Erin. But on the eighth day he returned, and when he entered his dūn he saw trouble in the eyes of his men, and of their fair womenfolk, and Saba was not on the rampart expecting his return. So he bade them tell him what had chanced, and they said:

"Whilst thou, our father and lord, wert afar off smiting the foreigner, and Saba looking ever down the pass for thy return, we saw one day as it were the likeness of thee approaching, and Bran and Skolawn at thy heels. And we seemed also to hear the notes of the Fian hunting-call blown on the wind. Then Saba hastened to the great gate, and we could not stay her, so eager was she to rush to the phantom. But when she came near she halted and gave a loud and bitter cry, and the shape of thee smote her with a hazel wand, and lo, there was no woman there any more, but a deer. Then those hounds chased it, and ever as it strove to reach again the gate of the dūn they turned back. We all now seized what arms we could and ran out to drive away the enchanter, but when we reached the place there was nothing to be seen, only still we heard the rushing of flying feet and the baying of dogs, and one thought it came from here, and another from there, till at last the uproar died away and all was still. What we could do, O Finn, we did; Saba is gone."

Finn then struck his hand on his breast, but spoke no word, and he went to his own chamber. No man saw him for the rest of that day, nor for the day after. Then he came forth, and ordered the matters of the Fianna as of old, but for seven years thereafter he went searching for Saba through every remote glen and dark forest and cavern of Ireland, and he would take no

hounds with him save Bran and Skolawn. But at last he renounced all hope of finding her again, and went hunting as of old.

One day as he was following the chase on Ben Bulban, in Sligo, he heard the musical bay of the dogs change of a sudden to a fierce growling and yelping, as though they were in combat with some beast, and running hastily up he and his men beheld, under a great tree, a naked boy with long hair, and around him the hounds struggling to seize him, but Bran and Skolawn fighting with them and keeping them off. And the lad was tall and shapely, and as the heroes gathered round he gazed undauntedly on them, never heeding the rout of dogs at his feet. The Fians beat off the dogs and brought the lad home with them, and Finn was very silent and continually searched the lad's countenance with his eyes. In time the use of speech came to him, and the story that he told was this:

He had known no father, and no mother save a gentle hind, with whom he lived in a most green and pleasant valley shut in on every side by towering cliffs that could not be scaled or by deep chasms in the earth. In the summer he lived on fruits and suchlike, and in the winter store of provisions was laid for him in a cave. And there came to them sometimes a tall, dark-visaged man, who spoke to his mother, now tenderly, and now in loud menace, but she always shrank away in fear, and the man departed in anger. At last there came a day when the dark man spoke very long with his mother in all tones of entreaty and of tenderness and of rage, but she would still keep aloof and give no sign save of fear and abhorrence. Then at length the dark man drew near and smote her with a hazel wand; and with that he turned and went his way, but she this time followed him, still looking back at her son and piteously complaining. And he, when he strove to follow, found himself unable to move a limb; and crying out with rage and desolation he fell to the earth, and his senses left him.

When he came to himself he was on the mountain-side on Ben Bulban, where he remained some days, searching for that green and hidden valley, which he never found again. And after a while the dogs found him; but of the hind his mother and of the Dark Druid there is no man knows the end.

Finn called his name Oisín (Little Fawn), and he became a warrior of fame, but far more famous for the songs and tales that he made; so that of all things to this day that are told of the Fianna of Erin men are wont to say: "Thus sang the bard Oisín, son of Finn."

## **Oisín and Niam**

It happened that on a misty summer morning as Finn and Oisín with many companions were hunting on the shores of Loch Lena they saw coming towards them a maiden, beautiful exceedingly, riding on a snow-white steed. She wore the garb of a queen; a crown of gold was on her head, and a dark-brown mantle of silk, set with stars of red gold, fell around her and trailed on the ground. Silver shoes were on her horse's hoofs, and a crest of gold nodded on his head. When she came near she said to Finn: "From very far away I have come, and now at last I have found thee, Finn son of Cumhal."

Then Finn said: "What is thy land and race, maiden, and what dost thou seek from me?"

"My name," she said, "is Niam of the Golden Hair. I am the daughter of the King of the Land of Youth, and that which has brought me here is the love of thy son Oisín." Then she turned to Oisín, and she spoke to him in the voice of one who has never asked anything but it was granted to her.

"Wilt thou go with me, Oisín, to my father's land?"

And Oisín said: "That will I, and to the world's end"; for the fairy spell had so wrought upon his heart that he cared no more for any earthly thing but to have the love of Niam of the Head of Gold.

Then the maiden spoke of the Land Oversea to which she had summoned her lover, and as she spoke a dreamy stillness fell on all things, nor did a horse shake his bit, nor a hound bay, nor the least breath of wind stir in the forest trees till she had made an end. And what she said seemed sweeter and more wonderful as she spoke it than anything they could afterwards remember to have heard, but so far as they could remember it it was this:

“Delightful is the land beyond all dreams,  
Fairer than aught thine eyes have ever seen.  
There all the year the fruit is on the tree,  
And all the year the bloom is on the flower.

“There with wild honey drip the forest trees;  
The stores of wine and mead shall never fail.  
Nor pain nor sickness knows the dweller there,  
Death and decay come near him never more.

“The feast shall cloy not, nor the chase shall tire,  
Nor music cease for ever through the hall;  
The gold and jewels of the Land of Youth  
Outshine all splendours ever dreamed by man.

“Thou shalt have horses of the fairy breed,  
Thou shalt have hounds that can outrun the wind;  
A hundred chiefs shall follow thee in war,  
A hundred maidens sing thee to thy sleep.

“A crown of sovereignty thy brow shall wear,  
And by thy side a magic blade shall hang,  
And thou shalt be lord of all the Land of Youth,  
And lord of Niam of the Head of Gold.”

As the magic song ended the Fians beheld Oisín mount the fairy steed and hold the maiden in his arms, and ere they could stir or speak she turned her horse's head and shook the ringing bridle, and down the forest glade they fled, as a beam of light flies over the land when clouds drive across the sun; and never did the Fianna behold Oisín son of Finn on earth again.

Yet what befell him afterwards is known. As his birth was strange, so was his end, for he saw the wonders of the Land of Youth with mortal eyes and lived to tell them with mortal lips.

## **The Journey to Fairyland**

When the white horse with its riders reached the sea it ran lightly over the waves, and soon the green woods and headlands of Erin faded out of sight. And now the sun shone fiercely down, and the riders passed into a golden haze in which Oisín lost all knowledge of where he was or if sea or dry land were beneath his horse's hoofs. But strange sights sometimes appeared to them in the mist, for towers and palace gateways loomed up and disappeared, and once a hornless doe bounded by them chased by a white hound with one red ear; and again they saw a young maid ride by on a brown steed, bearing a golden apple in her hand, and close behind her followed a young horseman on a white steed, a purple cloak floating at his back and a gold-hilted sword in his hand. And Oisín would have asked the princess who and what these apparitions were, but Niam bade him ask nothing nor seem to notice any phantom they might see until they were come to the Land of Youth.

## **Oisín's Return**

The story goes on to tell how Oisín met with various adventures in the Land of Youth, including the rescue of an imprisoned princess from a Fomorian giant. But at last, after what seemed to him a sojourn of three weeks in the Land of Youth, he was satiated with delights of every kind, and longed to visit his native land again and to see his old comrades. He promised to return when he had done so, and Niam gave him the white fairy steed that had borne him across the sea to Fairyland, but charged him that when he had reached the Land of Erin again he must never alight from its back nor touch the soil of the earthly world with his foot, or the way of return to the Land of Youth would be barred to him for ever. Oisín then set forth, and once more crossed the mystic ocean, finding himself at last on the western shores of Ireland. Here he made at once for the Hill of Allen, where the dūn of Finn was wont to be, but marvelled, as he traversed the woods, that he

met no sign of the Fian hunters and at the small size of the folk whom he saw tilling the ground.

At length, coming from the forest path into the great clearing where the Hill of Allen was wont to rise, broad and green, with its rampart enclosing many white-walled dwellings, and the great hall towering high in the midst, he saw but grassy mounds overgrown with rank weeds and whin bushes, and among them pastured a peasant's kine. Then a strange horror fell upon him and he thought some enchantment from the land of Faëry held his eyes and mocked him with false visions. He threw his arms abroad and shouted the names of Finn and Oscar, but none replied, and he thought that perchance the hounds might hear him, so he cried upon Bran and Skolawn and strained his ears if they might catch the faintest rustle or whisper of the world from the sight of which his eyes were holden, but he heard only the sighing of the wind in the whins. Then he rode in terror from that place, setting his face towards the eastern sea, for he meant to traverse Ireland from side to side and end to end in search of some escape from his enchantment.

### **The Broken Spell**

But when he came near to the eastern sea, and was now in the place which is called the Valley of the Thrushes,<sup>108</sup> he saw in a field upon the hillside a crowd of men striving to roll aside a great boulder from their tilled land, and an overseer directing them. Towards them he rode, meaning to ask them concerning Finn and the Fianna. As he came near they all stopped their work to gaze upon him, for to them he appeared like a messenger of the Fairy Folk or an angel from heaven. Taller and mightier he was than the men-folk they knew, with sword-blue eyes and brown, ruddy cheeks; in his mouth, as it were, a shower of pearls, and bright hair clustered beneath the rim of his helmet. And as Oisín looked upon their puny forms, marred by toil and care, and at the stone which they feebly strove to heave from its bed, he was filled with pity, and thought to himself, "Not such were even the churls of Erin when I left them for the Land of Youth" and he stooped

from his saddle to help them. He set his hand to the boulder, and with a mighty heave he lifted it from where it lay and set it rolling down the hill. And the men raised a shout of wonder and applause; but their shouting changed in a moment into cries of terror and dismay, and they fled, jostling and overthrowing each other to escape from the place of fear, for a marvel horrible to see had taken place. For Oisīn's saddle-girth had burst as he heaved the stone and he fell headlong to the ground. In an instant the white steed had vanished from their eyes like a wreath of mist, and that which rose, feeble and staggering, from the ground was no youthful warrior, but a man stricken with extreme old age, white-bearded and withered, who stretched out groping hands and moaned with feeble and bitter cries. And his crimson cloak and yellow silken tunic were now but coarse homespun stuff tied with a hempen girdle, and the gold-hilted sword was a rough oaken staff such as a beggar carries who wanders the roads from farmer's house to house.

When the people saw that the doom that had been wrought was not for them they returned, and found the old man prone on the ground with his face hidden in his arms. So they lifted him up, and asked who he was and what had befallen him. Oisīn gazed round on them with dim eyes, and at last he said: "I was Oisīn the son of Finn, and I pray ye tell me where he dwells, for his dūn on the Hill of Allen is now a desolation, and I have neither seen him nor heard his hunting-horn from the western to the eastern sea." Then the men gazed strangely on each other and on Oisīn, and the overseer asked: "Of what Finn dost thou speak, for there be many of that name in Erin?" Oisīn said: "Surely of Finn mac Cumhal mac Trenmōr, captain of the Fianna of Erin." Then the overseer said: "Thou art daft, old man, and thou hast made us daft to take thee for a youth as we did a while ago. But we at least have now our wits again, and we know that Finn son of Cumhal and all his generation have been dead these three hundred years. At the battle of Gowra fell Oscar, son of Oisīn, and Finn at the battle of Brea, as the historians tell us; and the lays of Oisīn, whose death no man knows the manner of, are sung by our harpers at great men's feasts. But now the Talkenn,<sup>109</sup> Patrick, has come into Ireland, and has preached to us the

One God and Christ His Son, by whose might these old days and ways are done away with; and Finn and his Fianna, with their feasting and hunting and songs of war and of love, have no such reverence among us as the monks and virgins of Holy Patrick, and the psalms and prayers that go up daily to cleanse us from sin and to save us from the fire of judgment.” But Oisīn replied, only half hearing and still less comprehending what was said to him: “If thy God have slain Finn and Oscar, I would say that God is a strong man.” Then they all cried out upon him, and some picked up stones, but the overseer bade them let him be until the Talkenn had spoken with him, and till he should order what was to be done.

### **Oisīn and Patrick**

So they brought him to Patrick, who treated him gently and hospitably, and to Patrick he told the story of all that had befallen him. But Patrick bade his scribes write all carefully down, that the memory of the heroes whom Oisīn had known, and of the joyous and free life they had led in the woods and glens and wild places of Erin, should never be forgotten among men.

This remarkable legend is known only in the modern Irish poem written by Michael Comyn about 1750, a poem which may be called the swan-song of Irish literature. Doubtless Comyn worked on earlier traditional material; but though the ancient Ossianic poems tell us of the prolongation of Oisīn's life, so that he could meet St. Patrick and tell him stories of the Fianna, the episodes of Niam's courtship and the sojourn in the Land of Youth are known to us at present only in the poem of Michael Comyn.

### **The Enchanted Cave**

This tale, which I take from S.H. O'Grady's edition in “*Silva Gadelica*,” relates that Finn once made a great hunting in the district of Corann, in Northern Connacht, which was ruled over by one Conaran, a lord of the Danaan Folk. Angered at the intrusion of the Fianna in his hunting-grounds, he sent his three sorcerer-daughters to take vengeance on the mortals.



Finn, it is said, and Conan the Bald, with Finn's two favourite hounds, were watching the hunt from the top of the Hill of Keshcorran and listening to the cries of the beaters and the notes of the horn and the baying of the dogs, when, in moving about on the hill, they came upon the mouth of a great cavern, before which sat three hags of evil and revolting aspect. On three crooked sticks of holly they had twisted left-handwise hanks of yarn, and were spinning with these when Finn and his followers arrived. To view them more closely the warriors drew near, when they found themselves suddenly entangled in strands of the yarn which the hags had spun about the place like the web of a spider, and deadly faintness and trembling came over them, so that they were easily bound fast by the hags and carried into the dark recesses of the cave. Others of the party then arrived, looking for Finn. All suffered the same experience—they lost all their pith and valour at the touch of the bewitched yarn, and were bound and carried into the cave, until the whole party were laid in bonds, with the dogs baying and howling outside.

The witches now seized their sharp, wide-channelled, hard-tempered swords, and were about to fall on the captives and slay them, but first they looked round at the mouth of the cave to see if there was any straggler whom they had not yet laid hold of. At this moment Goll mac Morna, “the raging lion, the torch of onset, the great of soul,” came up, and a desperate combat ensued, which ended by Goll cleaving two of the hags in twain, and then subduing and binding the third, whose name was Irnan. She, as he was about to slay her, begged for mercy—“Surely it were better for thee to have the Fianna whole”—and he gave her her life if she would release the prisoners.

Into the cave they went, and one by one the captives were unbound, beginning with the poet Fergus Truelips and the “men of science,” and they all sat down on the hill to recover themselves, while Fergus sang a chant of praise in honour of the rescuer, Goll; and Irnan disappeared.

Ere long a monster was seen approaching them, a “gnarled hag” with blazing, bloodshot eyes, a yawning mouth full of ragged fangs, nails like a wild beast's, and armed like a warrior. She laid Finn under *geise* to provide

her with single combat from among his men until she should have her fill of it. It was no other than the third sister, Irnan, whom Goll had spared. Finn in vain begged Oisín, Oscar, Keelta, and the other prime warriors of the Fianna to meet her; they all pleaded inability after the ill-treatment and contumely they had received. At last, as Finn himself was about to do battle with her, Goll said: “O Finn, combat with a crone beseems thee not,” and he drew sword for a second battle with this horrible enemy. At last, after a desperate combat, he ran her through her shield and through her heart, so that the blade stuck out at the far side, and she fell dead. The Fianna then sacked the dūn of Conaran, and took possession of all the treasure in it, while Finn bestowed on Goll mac Morna his own daughter, Keva of the White Skin, and, leaving the dūn a heap of glowing embers, they returned to the Hill of Allen.

### **The Chase of Slievegallion**

This fine story, which is given in poetical form, as if narrated by Oisín, in the Ossianic Society's “Transactions,” tells how Cullan the Smith (here represented as a Danaan divinity), who dwelt on or near the mountains of Slievegallion, in Co. Armagh, had two daughters, Ainé and Milucra, each of whom loved Finn mac Cumhal. They were jealous of each other; and on Ainé once happening to say that she would never have a man with grey hair, Milucra saw a means of securing Finn's love entirely for herself. So she assembled her friends among the Danaans round the little grey lake that lies on the top of Slievegallion, and they charged its waters with enchantments.

This introduction, it may be observed, bears strong signs of being a later addition to the original tale, made in a less understanding age or by a less thoughtful class into whose hands the legend had descended. The real meaning of the transformation which it narrates is probably much deeper.

The story goes on to say that not long after this the hounds of Finn, Bran and Skolawn, started a fawn near the Hill of Allen, and ran it northwards till the chase ended on the top of Slievegallion, a mountain which, like Slievenamon<sup>110</sup> in the south, was in ancient Ireland a veritable

focus of Danaan magic and legendary lore. Finn followed the hounds alone till the fawn disappeared on the mountain-side. In searching for it Finn at last came on the little lake which lies on the top of the mountain, and saw by its brink a lady of wonderful beauty, who sat there lamenting and weeping. Finn asked her the cause of her grief. She explained that a gold ring which she dearly prized had fallen from her finger into the lake, and she charged Finn by the bonds of *geise* that he should plunge in and find it for her.

Finn did so, and after diving into every recess of the lake he discovered the ring, and before leaving the water gave it to the lady. She immediately plunged into the lake and disappeared. Finn then surmised that some enchantment was being wrought on him, and ere long he knew what it was, for on stepping forth on dry land he fell down from sheer weakness, and arose again, a tottering and feeble old man, snowy-haired and withered, so that even his faithful hounds did not know him, but ran round the lake searching for their lost master.

Meantime Finn was missed from his palace on the Hill of Allen, and a party soon set out on the track on which he had been seen to chase the deer. They came to the lake-side on Slievegallion, and found there a wretched and palsied old man, whom they questioned, but who could do nothing but beat his breast and moan. At last, beckoning Keelta to come near, the aged man whispered faintly some words into his ear, and lo, it was Finn himself! When the Fianna had ceased from their cries of wonder and lamentation, Finn whispered to Keelta the tale of his enchantment, and told them that the author of it must be the daughter of Cullan the Smith, who dwelt in the Fairy Mound of Slievegallion. The Fianna, bearing Finn on a litter, immediately went to the Mound and began to dig fiercely. For three days and nights they dug at the Fairy Mound, and at last penetrated to its inmost recesses, when a maiden suddenly stood before them holding a drinking-horn of red gold. It was given to Finn. He drank from it, and at once his beauty and form were restored to him, but his hair still remained white as silver. This too would have been restored by another draught, but Finn let it stay as it was, and silver-white his hair remained to the day of his death.

The tale has been made the subject of a very striking allegorical drama, “The Masque of Finn,” by Mr. Standish O’Grady, who, rightly no doubt, interprets the story as symbolising the acquisition of wisdom and understanding through suffering. A leader of men must descend into the lake of tears and know feebleness and despair before his spirit can sway them to great ends.

There is an antique sepulchral monument on the mountain-top which the peasantry of the district still regard—or did in the days before Board schools—as the abode of the “Witch of the Lake”; and a mysterious beaten path, which was never worn by the passage of human feet, and which leads from the rock sepulchre to the lake-side, is ascribed to the going to and fro of this supernatural being.

### **The “Colloquy of the Ancients”**

One of the most interesting and attractive of the relics of Ossianic literature is the “Colloquy of the Ancients,” *Agallamh na Senorach*, a long narrative piece dating from about the thirteenth century. It has been published with a translation in O’Grady’s “Silva Gadelica.” It is not so much a story as a collection of stories skilfully set in a mythical framework. The “Colloquy” opens by presenting us with the figures of Keelta mac Ronan and Oisín son of Finn, each accompanied by eight warriors, all that are left of the great fellowship of the Fianna after the battle of Gowra and the subsequent dispersion of the Order. A vivid picture is given us of the grey old warriors, who had outlived their epoch, meeting for the last time at the dūn of a once famous chieftainess named Camha, and of their melancholy talk over bygone days, till at last a long silence settled on them.

### **Keelta Meets St. Patrick**

Finally Keelta and Oisín resolve to part, Oisín, of whom we hear little more, going to the Fairy Mound, where his Danaan mother (here called Blai) has her dwelling, while Keelta takes his way over the plains of Meath

till he comes to Drumderg, where he lights on St. Patrick and his monks. How this is chronologically possible the writer does not trouble himself to explain, and he shows no knowledge of the legend of Oisín in the Land of Youth. “The clerics,” says the story, “saw Keelta and his band draw near them, and fear fell on them before the tall men with the huge wolf-hounds that accompanied them, for they were not people of one epoch or of one time with the clergy.” Patrick then sprinkles the heroes with holy water, whereat legions of demons who had been hovering over them fly away into the hills and glens, and “the enormous men sat down.” Patrick, after inquiring the name of his guest, then says he has a boon to crave of him—he wishes to find a well of pure water with which to baptize the folk of Bregia and of Meath.

### **The Well of Tradaban**

Keelta, who knows every brook and hill and rath and wood in the country, thereon takes Patrick by the hand and leads him away “till,” as the writer says, “right in front of them they saw a loch-well, sparkling and translucid. The size and thickness of the cress and of the *fothlacht*, or brooklime, that grew on it was a wonderment to them.” Then Keelta began to tell of the fame and qualities of the place, and uttered an exquisite little lyric in praise of it:

“O Well of the Strand of the Two Women, beautiful are thy cresses, luxuriant, branching; since thy produce is neglected on thee thy brooklime is not suffered to grow. Forth from thy banks thy trout are to be seen, thy wild swine in the wilderness; the deer of thy fair hunting crag-land, thy dappled and red-chested fawns! Thy mast all hanging on the branches of the trees; thy fish in estuaries of the rivers; lovely the colours of thy purling streams, O thou that art azure-hued, and again green with reflections of surrounding copse-wood.”<sup>111</sup>

### **St. Patrick and Irish Legend**

After the warriors have been entertained Patrick asks: "Was he, Finn mac Cumhal, a good lord with whom ye were?" Keelta praises the generosity of Finn, and goes on to describe in detail the glories of his household, whereon Patrick says:

"Were it not for us an impairing of the devout life, an occasion of neglecting prayer, and of deserting converse with God, we, as we talked with thee, would feel the time pass quickly, warrior!"

Keelta goes on with another tale of the Fianna, and Patrick, now fairly caught in the toils of the enchanter, cries: "Success and benediction attend thee, Keelta! This is to me a lightening of spirit and mind. And now tell us another tale."

So ends the exordium of the "Colloquy." As usual in the openings of Irish tales, nothing could be better contrived; the touch is so light, there is so happy a mingling of pathos, poetry, and humour, and so much dignity in the sketching of the human characters introduced. The rest of the piece consists in the exhibition of a vast amount of topographical and legendary lore by Keelta, attended by the invariable "Success and benediction attend thee!" of Patrick.

They move together, the warrior and the saint, on Patrick's journey to Tara, and whenever Patrick or some one else in the company sees a hill or a fort or a well he asks Keelta what it is, and Keelta tells its name and a Fian legend to account for it, and so the story wanders on through a maze of legendary lore until they are met by a company from Tara, with the king at its head, who then takes up the *rôle* of questioner. The "Colloquy," as we have it now, breaks off abruptly as the story how the *Lia Fail* was carried off from Ireland is about to be narrated.<sup>112</sup> The interest of the "Colloquy" lies in the tales of Keelta and the lyrics introduced in the course of them. Of the tales there are about a hundred, telling of Fian raids and battles, and love-makings and feastings, but the greater number of them have to do with the intercourse between the Fairy Folk and the Fianna. With these folk the Fianna have constant relations, both of love and of war. Some of the tales are of great elaboration, wrought out in the highest style of which the writer was capable. One of the best is that of the fairy *Brugh*, or mansion of

Slievenamon, which Patrick and Keelta chance to pass by, and of which Keelta tells the following history:

### **The Brugh of Slievenamon**

One day as Finn and Keelta and five other champions of the Fianna were hunting at Torach, in the north, they roused a beautiful fawn which fled before them, they holding it in chase all day, till they reached the mountain of Slievenamon towards evening, when the fawn suddenly seemed to vanish underground. A chase like this, in the Ossianic literature, is the common prelude to an adventure in Fairyland. Night now fell rapidly, and with it came heavy snow and storm, and, searching for shelter, the Fianna discovered in the wood a great illuminated *Brugh*, or mansion, where they sought admittance. On entering they found themselves in a spacious hall, full of light, with eight-and-twenty warriors and as many fair and yellow-haired maidens, one of the latter seated on a chair of crystal, and making wonderful music on a harp. After the Fian warriors have been entertained with the finest of viands and liquors, it is explained to them that their hosts are Donn, son of Midir the Proud, and his brother, and that they are at war with the rest of the Danaan Folk, and have to do battle with them thrice yearly on the green before the *Brugh*. At first each of the twenty-eight had a thousand warriors under him. Now all are slain except those present, and the survivors have sent out one of their maidens in the shape of a fawn to entice the Fianna to their fairy palace and to gain their aid in the battle that must be delivered to-morrow. We have, in fact, a variant of the well-known theme of the Rescue of Fairyland. Finn and his companions are always ready for a fray, and a desperate battle ensues which lasts from evening till morning, for the fairy host attack at night. The assailants are beaten off, losing over a thousand of their number; but Oscar, Dermot, and mac Luga are sorely wounded. They are healed by magical herbs; and more fighting and other adventures follow, until, after a year has passed, Finn compels the enemy to make peace and give hostages, when the Fianna return to earth and rejoin their fellows. No sooner has Keelta finished his tale, standing on

the very spot where they had found the fairy palace on the night of snow, than a young warrior is seen approaching them. He is thus described: "A shirt of royal satin was next his skin; over and outside it a tunic of the same fabric; and a fringed crimson mantle, confined with a bodkin of gold, upon his breast; in his hand a gold-hilted sword, and a golden helmet on his head." A delight in the colour and material splendour of life is a very marked feature in all this literature. This splendid figure turns out to be Donn mac Midir, one of the eight-and-twenty whom Finn had succoured, and he comes to do homage for himself and his people to St. Patrick, who accepts entertainment from him for the night; for in the "Colloquy" the relations of the Church and of the Fairy World are very cordial.

### **The Three Young Warriors**

Nowhere in Celtic literature does the love of wonder and mystery find such remarkable expression as in the "Colloquy." The writer of this piece was a master of the touch that makes, as it were, the solid framework of things translucent; and shows us, through it, gleams of another world, mingled with ours yet distinct, and having other laws and characteristics. We never get a clue as to what these laws are. The Celt did not, in Ireland at least, systematise the unknown, but let it shine for a moment through the opaqueness of this earth and then withdrew the gleam before we understood what we had seen. Take, for instance, this incident in Keelta's account of the Fianna. Three young warriors come to take service with Finn, accompanied by a gigantic hound. They make their agreement with him, saying what services they can render and what reward they expect, and they make it a condition that they shall camp apart from the rest of the host, and that when night has fallen no man shall come near them or see them.

Finn asks the reason for this prohibition, and it is this: of the three warriors one has to die each night, and the other two must watch him; therefore they would not be disturbed. There is no explanation of this; the writer simply leaves us with the thrill of the mystery upon us.



## **The Fair Giantess**

Again, let us turn to the tale of the Fair Giantess. One day Finn and his warriors, while resting from the chase for their midday meal, saw coming towards them a towering shape. It proved to be a young giant maiden, who gave her name as Vivionn (Bebhionn) daughter of Treon, from the Land of Maidens. The gold rings on her fingers were as thick as an ox's yoke, and her beauty was dazzling. When she took off her gilded helmet, all bejewelled, her fair, curling golden hair broke out in seven score tresses, and Finn cried: "Great gods whom we adore, a huge marvel Cormac and Ethné and the women of the Fianna would esteem it to see Vivionn, the blooming daughter of Treon." The maiden explained that she had been betrothed against her will to a suitor named Æda, son of a neighbouring king; and that hearing from a fisherman, who had been blown to her shores, of the power and nobleness of Finn, she had come to seek his protection. While she was speaking, suddenly the Fianna were aware of another giant form close at hand. It was a young man, smooth-featured and of surpassing beauty, who bore a red shield and a huge spear. Without a word he drew near, and before the wondering Fianna could accost him he thrust his spear through the body of the maiden and passed away. Finn, enraged at this violation of his protection, called on his chiefs to pursue and slay the murderer. Keelta and others chased him to the sea-shore, and followed him into the surf, but he strode out to sea, and was met by a great galley which bore him away to unknown regions. Returning, discomfited, to Finn, they found the girl dying. She distributed her gold and jewels among them, and the Fianna buried her under a great mound, and raised a pillar stone over her with her name in Ogham letters, in the place since called the Ridge of the Dead Woman.

In this tale we have, besides the element of mystery, that of beauty. It is an association of frequent occurrence in this period of Celtic literature; and to this, perhaps, is due the fact that although these tales seem to come from nowhither and to lead nowhither, but move in a dream-world where there is no chase but seems to end in Fairyland and no combat that has any relation

to earthly needs or objects, where all realities are apt to dissolve in a magic light and to change their shapes like morning mist, yet they linger in the memory with that haunting charm which has for many centuries kept them alive by the fireside of the Gaelic peasant.

### **St. Patrick, Oisín, and Keelta**

Before we leave the “Colloquy” another interesting point must be mentioned in connexion with it. To the general public probably the best-known things in Ossianic literature—I refer, of course, to the true Gaelic poetry which goes under that name, not to the pseudo-Ossian of Macpherson—are those dialogues in which the pagan and the Christian ideals are contrasted, often in a spirit of humorous exaggeration or of satire. The earliest of these pieces are found in the manuscript called “The Dean of Lismore's Book,” in which James Macgregor, Dean of Lismore in Argyllshire, wrote down, some time before the year 1518, all he could remember or discover of traditional Gaelic poetry in his time. It may be observed that up to this period, and, indeed, long after it, Scottish and Irish Gaelic were one language and one literature, the great written monuments of which were in Ireland, though they belonged just as much to the Highland Celt, and the two branches of the Gael had an absolutely common stock of poetic tradition. These Oisín-and-Patrick dialogues are found in abundance both in Ireland and in the Highlands, though, as I have said, “The Dean of Lismore's Book” is their first written record now extant. What relation, then, do these dialogues bear to the Keelta-and-Patrick dialogues with which we make acquaintance in the “Colloquy”? The questions which really came first, where they respectively originated, and what current of thought or sentiment each represented, constitute, as Mr. Alfred Nutt has pointed out, a literary problem of the greatest interest; and one which no critic has yet attempted to solve, or, indeed, until quite lately, even to call attention to. For though these two attempts to represent, in imaginative and artistic form, the contact of paganism with Christianity are nearly identical

in machinery and framework, save that one is in verse and the other in prose, yet they differ widely in their point of view.

In the Oisín dialogues<sup>113</sup> there is a great deal of rough humour and of crude theology, resembling those of an English miracle-play rather than any Celtic product that I am acquainted with. St. Patrick in these ballads, as Mr. Nutt remarks, “is a sour and stupid fanatic, harping with wearisome monotony on the damnation of Finn and all his comrades; a hard taskmaster to the poor old blind giant to whom he grudges food, and upon whom he plays shabby tricks in order to terrify him into acceptance of Christianity.” Now in the “Colloquy” there is not one word of all this. Keelta embraces Christianity with a wholehearted reverence, and salvation is not denied to the friends and companions of his youth. Patrick, indeed, assures Keelta of the salvation of several of them, including Finn himself. One of the Danaan Folk, who has been bard to the Fianna, delighted Patrick with his minstrelsy. Brogan, the scribe whom St. Patrick is employing to write down the Fian legends, says: “If music there is in heaven, why should there not be on earth? Wherefore it is not right to banish minstrelsy.” Patrick made answer: “Neither say I any such thing”; and, in fact, the minstrel is promised heaven for his art.

Such are the pleasant relations that prevail in the “Colloquy” between the representatives of the two epochs. Keelta represents all that is courteous, dignified, generous, and valorous in paganism, and Patrick all that is benign and gracious in Christianity; and instead of the two epochs standing over against each other in violent antagonism, and separated by an impassable gulf, all the finest traits in each are seen to harmonise with and to supplement those of the other.

### **Tales of Dermot**

A number of curious legends centre on Dermot O'Dyna, who has been referred to as one of Finn mac Cumhal's most notable followers. He might be described as a kind of Gaelic Adonis, a type of beauty and attraction, the

hero of innumerable love tales; and, like Adonis, his death was caused by a wild boar.

### **The Boar of Ben Bulben**

The boar was no common beast. The story of its origin was as follows: Dermot's father, Donn, gave the child to be nurtured by Angus Ōg in his palace on the Boyne. His mother, who was unfaithful to Donn, bore another child to Roc, the steward of Angus. Donn, one day, when the steward's child ran between his knees to escape from some hounds that were fighting on the floor of the hall, gave him a squeeze with his two knees that killed him on the spot, and he then flung the body among the hounds on the floor. When the steward found his son dead, and discovered (with Finn's aid) the cause of it, he brought a Druid rod and smote the body with it, whereupon, in place of the dead child, there arose a huge boar, without ears or tail; and to it he spake: "I charge you to bring Dermot O'Dyna to his death"; and the boar rushed out from the hall and roamed in the forests of Ben Bulben in Co. Sligo till the time when his destiny should be fulfilled.

But Dermot grew up into a splendid youth, tireless in the chase, undaunted in war, beloved by all his comrades of the Fianna, whom he joined as soon as he was of age to do so.

### **How Dermot Got the Love Spot**

He was called Dermot of the Love Spot, and a curious and beautiful folk-tale recorded by Dr. Douglas Hyde<sup>114</sup> tells how he got this appellation. With three comrades, Goll, Conan, and Oscar, he was hunting one day, and late at night they sought a resting-place. They soon found a hut, in which were an old man, a young girl, a wether sheep, and a cat. Here they asked for hospitality, and it was granted to them. But, as usual in these tales, it was a house of mystery.

When they sat down to dinner the wether got up and mounted on the table. One after another the Fianna strove to throw it off, but it shook them

down on the floor. At last Goll succeeded in flinging it off the table, but him too it vanquished in the end, and put them all under its feet. Then the old man bade the cat lead the wether back and fasten it up, and it did so easily. The four champions, overcome with shame, were for leaving the house at once; but the old man explained that they had suffered no discredit—the wether they had been fighting with was the World, and the cat was the power that would destroy the world itself, namely, Death.

At night the four heroes went to rest in a large chamber, and the young maid came to sleep in the same room; and it is said that her beauty made a light on the walls of the room like a candle. One after another the Fianna went over to her couch, but she repelled them all. “I belonged to you once,” she said to each, “and I never will again.” Last of all Dermot went. “O Dermot,” she said, “you, also, I belonged to once, and I never can again, for I am Youth; but come here and I will put a mark on you so that no woman can ever see you without loving you.” Then she touched his forehead, and left the Love Spot there; and that drew the love of women to him as long as he lived.

### **The Chase of the Hard Gilly**

The Chase of the Gilla Dacar is another Fian tale in which Dermot plays a leading part. The Fianna, the story goes, were hunting one day on the hills and through the woods of Munster, and as Finn and his captains stood on a hillside listening to the baying of the hounds, and the notes of the Fian hunting-horn from the dark wood below, they saw coming towards them a huge, ugly, misshapen churl dragging along by a halter a great raw-boned mare. He announced himself as wishful to take service with Finn. The name he was called by, he said, was the Gilla Dacar (the Hard Gilly), because he was the hardest servant ever a lord had to get service or obedience from. In spite of this unpromising beginning, Finn, whose principle it was never to refuse any suitor, took him into service; and the Fianna now began to make their uncouth comrade the butt of all sorts of rough jokes, which ended in thirteen of them, including Conan the Bald, all mounting up on the Gilla

Dacar's steed. On this the newcomer complained that he was being mocked, and he shambled away in great discontent till he was over the ridge of the hill, when he tucked up his skirts and ran westwards, faster than any March wind, toward the sea-shore in Co. Kerry. Thereupon at once the steed, which had stood still with drooping ears while the thirteen riders in vain belaboured it to make it move, suddenly threw up its head and started off in a furious gallop after its master. The Fianna ran alongside, as well as they could for laughter, while Conan, in terror and rage, reviled them for not rescuing him and his comrades. At last the thing became serious. The Gilla Dacar plunged into the sea, and the mare followed him with her thirteen riders, and one more who managed to cling to her tail just as she left the shore; and all of them soon disappeared towards the fabled region of the West.

### **Dermot at the Well**

Finn and the remaining Fianna now took counsel together as to what should be done, and finally decided to fit out a ship and go in search of their comrades. After many days of voyaging they reached an island guarded by precipitous cliffs. Dermot O'Dyna, as the most agile of the party, was sent to climb them and to discover, if he could, some means of helping up the rest of the party. When he arrived at the top he found himself in a delightful land, full of the song of birds and the humming of bees and the murmur of streams, but with no sign of habitation. Going into a dark forest, he soon came to a well, by which hung a curiously wrought drinking-horn. As he filled it to drink, a low, threatening murmur came from the well, but his thirst was too keen to let him heed it and he drank his fill. In no long time there came through the wood an armed warrior, who violently upbraided him for drinking from his well. The Knight of the Well and Dermot then fought all the afternoon without either of them prevailing over the other, when, as evening drew on, the knight suddenly leaped into the well and disappeared. Next day the same thing happened; on the third, however,

Dermot, as the knight was about to take his leap, flung his arms round him, and both went down together.

## **The Rescue of Fairyland**

Dermot, after a moment of darkness and trance, now found himself in Fairyland. A man of noble appearance roused him and led him away to the castle of a great king, where he was hospitably entertained. It was explained to him that the services of a champion like himself were needed to do combat against a rival monarch of Faëry. It is the same motive which we find in the adventures of Cuchulain with Fand, and which so frequently turns up in Celtic fairy lore. Finn and his companions, finding that Dermot did not return to them, found their way up the cliffs, and, having traversed the forest, entered a great cavern which ultimately led them out to the same land as that in which Dermot had arrived. There too, they are informed, are the fourteen Fianna who had been carried off on the mare of the Hard Gilly. He, of course, was the king who needed their services, and who had taken this method of decoying some thirty of the flower of Irish fighting men to his side. Finn and his men go into the battle with the best of goodwill, and scatter the enemy like chaff; Oscar slays the son of the rival king (who is called the King of "Greece"). Finn wins the love of his daughter, Tasha of the White Arms, and the story closes with a delightful mixture of gaiety and mystery. "What reward wilt thou have for thy good services?" asks the fairy king of Finn. "Thou wert once in service with me," replies Finn, "and I mind not that I gave thee any recompense. Let one service stand against the other." "Never shall I agree to that," cries Conan the Bald. "Shall I have nought for being carried off on thy wild mare and haled oversea?" "What wilt thou have?" asks the fairy king. "None of thy gold or goods," replies Conan, "but mine honour hath suffered, and let mine honour be appeased. Set thirteen of thy fairest womenfolk on the wild mare, O King, and thine own wife clinging to her tail, and let them be transported to Erin in like manner as we were dragged here, and I shall deem the indignity we have suffered fitly atoned for." On this the king smiled and, turning to Finn, said:

“O Finn, behold thy men.” Finn turned to look at them, but when he looked round again the scene had changed—the fairy king and his host and all the world of Faëry had disappeared, and he found himself with his companions and the fair-armed Tasha standing on the beach of the little bay in Kerry whence the Hard Gilly and the mare had taken the water and carried off his men. And then all started with cheerful hearts for the great standing camp of the Fianna on the Hill of Allen to celebrate the wedding feast of Finn and Tasha.

### **Effect of Christianity on the Development of Irish Literature**

This tale with its fascinating mixture of humour, romance, magic, and love of wild nature, may be taken as a typical specimen of the Fian legends at their best. As compared with the Conorian legends they show, as I have pointed out, a characteristic lack of any heroic or serious element. That nobler strain died out with the growing predominance of Christianity, which appropriated for definitely religious purposes the more serious and lofty side of the Celtic genius, leaving for secular literature only the elements of wonder and romance. So completely was this carried out that while the Finn legends have survived to this day among the Gaelic-speaking population, and were a subject of literary treatment as long as Gaelic was written at all, the earlier cycle perished almost completely out of the popular remembrance, or survived only in distorted forms; and but for the early manuscripts in which the tales are fortunately enshrined such a work as the “Tain Bo Cuailgne”—the greatest thing undoubtedly which the Celtic genius ever produced in literature—would now be irrecoverably lost.

### **The Tales of Deirdre and of Grania**

Nothing can better illustrate the difference between the two cycles than a comparison of the tale of Deirdre with that with which we have now to deal—the tale of Dermot and Grania. The latter, from one point of view, reads like an echo of the former, so close is the resemblance between them in the



outline of the plot. Take the following skeleton story: "A fair maiden is betrothed to a renowned and mighty suitor much older than herself. She turns from him to seek a younger lover, and fixes her attention on one of his followers, a gallant and beautiful youth, whom she persuades, in spite of his reluctance, to fly with her. After evading pursuit they settle down for a while at a distance from the defrauded lover, who bides his time, till at last, under cover of a treacherous reconciliation, he procures the death of his younger rival and retakes possession of the lady." Were a student of Celtic legend asked to listen to the above synopsis, and to say to what Irish tale it referred, he would certainly reply that it must be either the tale of the Pursuit of Dermot and Grania, or that of the Fate of the Sons of Usna; but which of them it was it would be quite impossible for him to tell. Yet in tone and temper the two stories are as wide apart as the poles.

### **Grania and Dermot**

Grania, in the Fian story, is the daughter of Cormac mac Art, High King of Ireland. She is betrothed to Finn mac Cumhal, whom we are to regard at this period as an old and war-worn but still mighty warrior. The famous captains of the Fianna all assemble at Tara for the wedding feast, and as they sit at meat Grania surveys them and asks their names of her father's Druid, Dara. "It is a wonder," she says, "that Finn did not ask me for Oisín, rather than for himself." "Oisín would not dare to take thee," says Dara. Grania, after going through all the company, asks: "Who is that man with the spot on his brow, with the sweet voice, with curling dusky hair and ruddy cheek?" "That is Dermot O'Dyna," replies the Druid, "the white-toothed, of the lightsome countenance, in all the world the best lover of women and maidens." Grania now prepares a sleepy draught, which she places in a drinking-cup and passes round by her handmaid to the king, to Finn, and to all the company except the chiefs of the Fianna. When the draught has done its work she goes to Oisín. "Wilt thou receive courtship from me, Oisín?" she asks. "That will I not," says Oisín, "nor from any woman that is betrothed to Finn." Grania, who knew very well what Oisín's

answer would be, now turns to her real mark, Dermot. He at first refuses to have anything to do with her. "I put thee under bonds (*geise*), O Dermot, that thou take me out of Tara to-night." "Evil are these bonds, Grania," says Dermot; "and wherefore hast thou put them on me before all the kings' sons that feast at this table?" Grania then explains that she has loved Dermot ever since she saw him, years ago, from her sunny bower, take part in and win a great hurling match on the green at Tara. Dermot, still very reluctant, pleads the merits of Finn, and urges also that Finn has the keys of the royal fortress, so that they cannot pass out at night. "There is a secret wicket-gate in my bower," says Grania. "I am under *geise* not to pass through any wicket-gate," replies Dermot, still struggling against his destiny. Grania will have none of these subterfuges—any Fian warrior, she has been told, can leap over a palisade with the aid of his spear as a jumping-pole; and she goes off to make ready for the elopement. Dermot, in great perplexity, appeals to Oisín, Oscar, Keelta, and the others as to what he should do. They all bid him keep his *geise*—the bonds that Grania had laid on him to succour her—and he takes leave of them with tears.

Outside the wicket-gate he again begs Grania to return. "It is certain that I will not go back," says Grania, "nor part from thee till death part us." "Then go forward, O Grania," says Dermot. After they had gone a mile, "I am truly weary, O grandson of Dyna," says Grania. "It is a good time to be weary," says Dermot, making a last effort to rid himself of the entanglement, "and return now to thy household again, for I pledge the word of a true warrior that I will never carry thee nor any other woman to all eternity." "There is no need," replies Grania, and she directs him where to find horses and a chariot, and Dermot, now finally accepting the inevitable, yokes them, and they proceed on their way to the Ford of Luan on the Shannon.<sup>115</sup>

## **The Pursuit**

Next day Finn, burning with rage, sets out with his warriors on their track. He traces out each of their halting-places, and finds the hut of wattles which

Dermot has made for their shelter, and the bed of soft rushes, and the remains of the meal they had eaten. And at each place he finds a piece of unbroken bread or uncooked salmon—Dermot's subtle message to Finn that he has respected the rights of his lord and treated Grania as a sister. But this delicacy of Dermot's is not at all to Crania's mind, and she conveys her wishes to him in a manner which is curiously paralleled by an episode in the tale of Tristan and Iseult of Brittany, as told by Heinrich von Freiberg. They are passing through a piece of wet ground when a splash of water strikes Grania. She turns to her companion: "Thou art a mighty warrior, O Dermot, in battle and sieges and forays, yet meseems that this drop of water is bolder than thou." This hint that he was keeping at too respectful a distance was taken by Dermot. The die is now cast, and he will never again meet Finn and his old comrades except at the point of the spear.

The tale now loses much of the originality and charm of its opening scene, and recounts in a somewhat mechanical manner a number of episodes in which Dermot is attacked or besieged by the Fianna, and rescues himself and his lady by miracles of boldness or dexterity, or by aid of the magical devices of his foster-father, Angus Ōg. They are chased all over Ireland, and the dolmens in that country are popularly associated with them, being called in the traditions of the peasantry "Beds of Dermot and Grania."

Grania's character is drawn throughout with great consistency. She is not an heroic woman—hers are not the simple, ardent impulses and unwavering devotion of a Deirdre. The latter is far more primitive. Grania is a curiously modern and what would be called "neurotic" type—wilful, restless, passionate, but full of feminine fascination.

### **Dermot and Finn Make Peace**

After sixteen years of outlawry peace is at last made for Dermot by the mediation of Angus with King Cormac and with Finn. Dermot receives his proper patrimony, the Cantred of O'Dyna, and other lands far away in the West, and Cormac gives another of his daughters to Finn. "Peaceably they

abode a long time with each other, and it was said that no man then living was richer in gold and silver, in flocks and herds, than Dermot O'Dyna, nor one that made more preys."<sup>116</sup> Grania bears to Dermot four sons and a daughter.

But Grania is not satisfied until "the two best men that are in Erin, namely, Cormac son of Art and Finn son of Cumhal," have been entertained in her house. "And how do we know," she adds, "but our daughter might then get a fitting husband?" Dermot agrees with some misgiving; the king and Finn accept the invitation, and they and their retinues are feasted for a year at Rath Grania.

### **The Vengeance of Finn**

Then one night, towards the end of the year of feasting, Dermot is awakened from sleep by the baying of a hound. He starts up, "so that Grania caught him and threw her two arms about him and asked him what he had seen." "It is the voice of a hound," says Dermot, "and I marvel to hear it in the night." "Save and protect thee," says Grania; "it is the Danaan Folk that are at work on thee. Lay thee down again." But three times the hound's voice awakens him, and on the morrow he goes forth armed with sword and sling, and followed by his own hound, to see what is afoot.

On the mountain of Ben Bulben in Sligo he comes across Finn with a hunting-party of the Fianna. They are not now hunting, however; they are being hunted; for they have roused up the enchanted boar without ears or tail, the Boar of Ben Bulben, which has slain thirty of them that morning. "And do thou come away," says Finn, knowing well that Dermot will never retreat from a danger; "for thou art under *geise* not to hunt pig." "How is that?" says Dermot, and Finn then tells him the weird story of the death of the steward's son and his revivification in the form of this boar, with its mission of vengeance. "By my word," quoth Dermot, "it is to slay me that thou hast made this hunt, O Finn; and if it be here that I am fated to die, I have no power now to shun it."

The beast then appears on the face of the mountain, and Dermot slips the hound at him, but the hound flies in terror. Dermot then slings a stone which strikes the boar fairly in the middle of his forehead but does not even scratch his skin. The beast is close on him now, and Dermot strikes him with his sword, but the weapon flies in two and not a bristle of the boar is cut. In the charge of the boar Dermot falls over him, and is carried for a space clinging to his back; but at last the boar shakes him off to the ground, and making “an eager, exceeding mighty spring” upon him, rips out his bowels, while at the same time, with the hilt of the sword still in his hand, Dermot dashes out the brains of the beast, and it falls dead beside him.

### **Death of Dermot**

The implacable Finn then comes up, and stands over Dermot in his agony. “It likes me well to see thee in that plight, O Dermot,” he says, “and I would that all the women in Ireland saw thee now; for thy excellent beauty is turned to ugliness and thy choice form to deformity.” Dermot reminds Finn of how he once rescued him from deadly peril when attacked during a feast at the house of Derc, and begs him to heal him with a draught of water from his hands, for Finn had the magic gift of restoring any wounded man to health with a draught of well-water drawn in his two hands. “Here is no well,” says Finn. “That is not true,” says Dermot, “for nine paces from you is the best well of pure water in the world.” Finn, at last, on the entreaty of Oscar and the Fianna, and after the recital of many deeds done for his sake by Dermot in old days, goes to the well, but ere he brings the water to Dermot's side he lets it fall through his fingers. A second time he goes, and a second time he lets the water fall, “having thought upon Grania,” and Dermot gave a sigh of anguish on seeing it. Oscar then declares that if Finn does not bring the water promptly either he or Finn shall never leave the hill alive, and Finn goes once more to the well, but it is now too late; Dermot is dead before the healing draught can reach his lips. Then Finn takes the hound of Dermot, the chiefs of the Fianna lay their cloaks over the dead man, and they return to Rath Grania. Grania, seeing the hound led by Finn,

conjectures what has happened, and swoons upon the rampart of the Rath. Oisīn, when she has revived, gives her the hound, against Finn's will, and the Fianna troop away, leaving her to her sorrow. When the people of Grania's household go out to fetch in the body of Dermot they find there Angus Ōg and his company of the People of Dana, who, after raising three bitter and terrible cries, bear away the body on a gilded bier, and Angus declares that though he cannot restore the dead to life, "I will send a soul into him so that he may talk with me each day."

### **The End of Grania**

To a tale like this modern taste demands a romantic and sentimental ending; and such has actually been given to it in the retelling by Dr. P. W. Joyce in his "Old Celtic Romances," as it has to the tale of Deirdre by almost every modern writer who has handled it.<sup>117</sup> But the Celtic story-teller felt differently. The tale of the end of Deirdre is horribly cruel, that of Grania cynical and mocking; neither is in the least sentimental. Grania is at first enraged with Finn, and sends her sons abroad to learn feats of arms, so that they may take vengeance upon him when the time is ripe. But Finn, wily and far-seeing as he is portrayed in this tale, knows how to forestall this danger. When the tragedy on Ben Bulbin has begun to grow a little faint in the shallow soul of Grania, he betakes himself to her, and though met at first with scorn and indignation he woos her so sweetly and with such tenderness that at last he brings her to his will, and he bears her back as a bride to the Hill of Allen. When the Fianna see the pair coming towards them in this loving guise they burst into a shout of laughter and derision, "so that Grania bowed her head in shame." "We trow, O Finn," cries Oisīn, "that thou wilt keep Grania well from henceforth." So Grania made peace between Finn and her sons, and dwelt with Finn as his wife until he died.

### **Two Streams of Fian Legends**

It will be noticed that in this legend Finn does not appear as a sympathetic character. Our interest is all on the side of Dermot. In this aspect of it the tale is typical of a certain class of Fian stories. Just as there were two rival clans within the Fian organisation—the Clan Bascna and the Clan Morna—who sometimes came to blows for the supremacy, so there are two streams of legends seeming to flow respectively from one or other of these sources, in one of which Finn is glorified, while in the other he is belittled in favour of Goll mac Morna or any other hero with whom he comes into conflict.

### **End of the Fianna**

The story of the end of the Fianna is told in a number of pieces, some prose, some poetry, all of them, however, agreeing in presenting this event as a piece of sober history, without any of the supernatural and mystical atmosphere in which nearly all the Fian legends are steeped.

After the death of Cormac mac Art his son Cairbry came to the High-Kingship of Ireland. He had a fair daughter named *Sgeimh Solais* (Light of Beauty), who was asked in marriage by a son of the King of the Decies. The marriage was arranged, and the Fianna claimed a ransom or tribute of twenty ingots of gold, which, it is said, was customarily paid to them on these occasions. It would seem that the Fianna had now grown to be a distinct power within the State, and an oppressive one, exacting heavy tributes and burdensome privileges from kings and sub-kings all over Ireland. Cairbry resolved to break them; and he thought he had now a good opportunity to do so. He therefore refused payment of the ransom, and summoned all the provincial kings to help him against the Fianna, the main body of whom immediately went into rebellion for what they deemed their rights. The old feud between Clan Bascna and Clan Morna now broke out afresh, the latter standing by the High King, while Clan Bascna, aided by the King of Munster and his forces, who alone took their side, marched against Cairbry.

### **The Battle of Gowra**

All this sounds very matter-of-fact and probable, but how much real history there may be in it it is very hard to say. The decisive battle of the war which ensued took place at Gowra (Gabhra), the name of which survives in Garristown, Co. Dublin. The rival forces, when drawn up in battle array, knelt and kissed the sacred soil of Erin before they charged. The story of the battle in the poetical versions, one of which is published in the Ossianic Society's "Transactions," and another and finer one in Campbell's "The Fians,"<sup>118</sup> is supposed to be related by Oisín to St. Patrick. He lays great stress on the feats of his son Oscar:

"My son urged his course  
Through the battalions of Tara  
Like a hawk through a flock of birds,  
Or a rock descending a mountain-side."

### **The Death of Oscar**

The fight was *à outrance*, and the slaughter on both sides tremendous. None but old men and boys, it is said, were left in Erin after that fight. The Fianna were in the end almost entirely exterminated, and Oscar slain. He and the King of Ireland, Cairbry, met in single combat, and each of them slew the other. While Oscar was still breathing, though there was not a palm's breadth on his body without a wound, his father found him:

"I found my own son lying down  
On his left elbow, his shield by his side;  
His right hand clutched the sword,  
The blood poured through his mail

"Oscar gazed up at me—  
Woe to me was that sight!  
He stretched out his two arms to me,  
Endeavouring to rise to meet me.



“I grasped the hand of my son  
And sat down by his left side;  
And since I sat by him there,  
I have recked nought of the world.”

When Finn (in the Scottish version) comes to bewail his grandson, he cries:

“Woe, that it was not I who fell  
In the fight of bare sunny Gavra,  
And you were east and west  
Marching before the Fians, Oscar.”

But Oscar replies:

“Were it you that fell  
In the fight of bare sunny Gavra,  
One sigh, east or west,  
Would not be heard for you from Oscar.

“No man ever knew  
A heart of flesh was in my breast,  
But a heart of the twisted horn  
And a sheath of steel over it.

“But the howling of dogs beside me,  
And the wail of the old heroes,  
And the weeping of the women by turns,  
'Tis that vexes my heart.”

Oscar dies, after thanking the gods for his father's safety, and Oisín and Keelta raise him on a bier of spears and carry him off under his banner, “The Terrible Sheaf,” for burial on the field where he died, and where a great green burial mound is still associated with his name. Finn takes no

part in the battle. He is said to have come “in a ship” to view the field afterwards, and he wept over Oscar, a thing he had never done save once before, for his hound, Bran, whom he himself killed by accident. Possibly the reference to the ship is an indication that he had by this time passed away, and came to revisit the earth from the oversea kingdom of Death.

There is in this tale of the Battle of Gowra a melancholy grandeur which gives it a place apart in the Ossianic literature. It is a fitting dirge for a great legendary epoch. Campbell tells us that the Scottish crofters and shepherds were wont to put off their bonnets when they recited it. He adds a strange and thrilling piece of modern folk-lore bearing on it. Two men, it is said, were out at night, probably sheep-stealing or on some other predatory occupation, and telling Fian tales as they went, when they observed two giant and shadowy figures talking to each other across the glen. One of the apparitions said to the other: “Do you see that man down below? I was the second door-post of battle on the day of Gowra, and that man there knows all about it better than myself.”

### **The End of Finn**

As to Finn himself, it is strange that in all the extant mass of the Ossianic literature there should be no complete narrative of his death. There are references to it in the poetic legends, and annalists even date it, but the references conflict with each other, and so do the dates. There is no clear light to be obtained on the subject from either annalists or poets. Finn seems to have melted into the magic mist which enwraps so many of his deeds in life. Yet a popular tradition says that he and his great companions, Oscar and Keelta and Oisīn and the rest, never died, but lie, like Kaiser Barbarossa, spell-bound in an enchanted cave where they await the appointed time to reappear in glory and redeem their land from tyranny and wrong.

# The Voyage of Maeldūn

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Besides the legends which cluster round great heroic names, and have, or at least pretend to have, the character of history, there are many others, great and small, which tell of adventures lying purely in regions of romance, and out of earthly space and time. As a specimen of these I give here a summary of the “Voyage of Maeldūn,” a most curious and brilliant piece of invention, which is found in the manuscript entitled the “Book of the Dun Cow” (about 1100) and other early sources, and edited, with a translation (to which I owe the following extracts), by Dr. Whitley Stokes in the “Revue Celtique” for 1888 and 1889. It is only one of a number of such wonder-voyages found in ancient Irish literature, but it is believed to have been the earliest of them all and model for the rest, and it has had the distinction, in the abridged and modified form given by Joyce in his “Old Celtic Romances,” of having furnished the theme for the “Voyage of Maeldune” to Tennyson, who made it into a wonderful creation of rhythm and colour, embodying a kind of allegory of Irish history. It will be noticed at the end that we are in the unusual position of knowing the name of the author of this piece of primitive literature, though he does not claim to have composed, but only to have “put in order,” the incidents of the “Voyage.” Unfortunately we cannot tell when he lived, but the tale as we have it probably dates from the ninth century. Its atmosphere is entirely Christian, and it has no mythological significance except in so far as it teaches the lesson that the oracular injunctions of wizards should be obeyed. No adventure, or even detail, of importance is omitted in the following summary of the story, which is given thus fully because the reader may take it as representing a large and important section of Irish legendary romance. Apart from the source to which I am indebted, the “Revue Celtique,” I know no other faithful reproduction in English of this wonderful tale.

The “Voyage of Maeldūn” begins, as Irish tales often do, by telling us of the conception of its hero.

There was a famous man of the sept of the Owens of Aran, named Ailill Edge-of-Battle, who went with his king on a foray into another territory. They encamped one night near a church and convent of nuns. At midnight Ailill, who was near the church, saw a certain nun come out to strike the bell for nocturns, and caught her by the hand. In ancient Ireland religious persons were not much respected in time of war, and Ailill did not respect her. When they parted, she said to him: "Whence is thy race, and what is thy name?" Said the hero: "Ailill of the Edge-of-Battle is my name, and I am of the Owenacht of Aran, in Thomond."

Not long afterwards Ailill was slain by reavers from Leix, who burned the church of Doocloone over his head.

In due time a son was born to the woman and she called his name Maeldūn. He was taken secretly to her friend, the queen of the territory, and by her Maeldūn was reared. "Beautiful indeed was his form, and it is doubtful if there hath been in flesh any one so beautiful as he. So he grew up till he was a young warrior and fit to use weapons. Great, then, was his brightness and his gaiety and his playfulness. In his play he outwent all his comrades in throwing balls, and in running and leaping and putting stones and racing horses."

One day a proud young warrior who had been defeated by him taunted him with his lack of knowledge of his kindred and descent. Maeldūn went to his foster-mother, the queen, and said: "I will not eat nor drink till thou tell me who are my mother and my father." "I am thy mother," said the queen, "for none ever loved her son more than I love thee." But Maeldūn insisted on knowing all, and the queen at last took him to his own mother, the nun, who told him: "Thy father was Ailill of the Owens of Aran." Then Maeldūn went to his own kindred, and was well received by them; and with him he took as guests his three beloved foster-brothers, sons of the king and queen who had brought him up.

After a time Maeldūn happened to be among a company of young warriors who were contending at putting the stone in the graveyard of the ruined church of Doocloone. Maeldūn's foot was planted, as he heaved the stone, on a scorched and blackened flagstone; and one who was by, a monk

named Briccne,<sup>119</sup> said to him: "It were better for thee to avenge the man who was burnt there than to cast stones over his burnt bones."

"Who was that?" asked Maeldūn.

"Ailill, thy father," they told him.

"Who slew him?" said he.

"Reavers from Leix," they said, "and they destroyed him on this spot."

Then Maeldūn threw down the stone he was about to cast, and put his mantle round him and went home; and he asked the way to Leix. They told him he could only go there by sea.<sup>120</sup>

At the advice of a Druid he then built him a boat, or coracle, of skins lapped threefold one over the other; and the wizard also told him that seventeen men only must accompany him, and on what day he must begin the boat and on what day he must put out to sea.

So when his company was ready he put out and hoisted the sail, but had gone only a little way when his three foster-brothers came down to the beach and entreated him to take them. "Get you home," said Maeldūn, "for none but the number I have may go with me." But the three youths would not be separated from Maeldūn, and they flung themselves into the sea. He turned back, lest they should be drowned, and brought them into his boat. All, as we shall see, were punished for this transgression, and Maeldūn condemned to wandering until expiation had been made.

Irish bardic tales excel in their openings. In this case, as usual, the *mise-en-scène* is admirably contrived. The narrative which follows tells how, after seeing his father's slayer on an island, but being unable to land there, Maeldūn and his party are blown out to sea, where they visit a great number of islands and have many strange adventures on them. The tale becomes, in fact, a *cento* of stories and incidents, some not very interesting, while in others, as in the adventure of the Island of the Silver Pillar, or the Island of the Flaming Rampart, or that where the episode of the eagle takes place, the Celtic sense of beauty, romance, and mystery find an expression unsurpassed, perhaps, in literature.

In the following rendering I have omitted the verses given by Joyce at the end of each adventure. They merely recapitulate the prose narrative, and

are not found in the earliest manuscript authorities.

### **The Island of the Slaves**

Maeldūn and his crew had rowed all day and half the night when they came to two small bare islands with two forts in them, and a noise was heard from them of armed men quarrelling. “Stand off from me,” cried one of them, “for I am a better man than thou. 'Twas I slew Ailill of the Edge-of-Battle and burned the church of Doo cloone over him, and no kinsman has avenged his death on me. And *thou* hast never done the like of that.”

Then Maeldūn was about to land, and Germān<sup>121</sup> and Diuran the Rhymer cried that God had guided them to the spot where they would be. But a great wind arose suddenly and blew them off into the boundless ocean, and Maeldūn said to his foster-brothers: “Ye have caused this to be, casting yourselves on board in spite of the words of the Druid.” And they had no answer, save only to be silent for a little space.

### **The Island of the Ants**

They drifted three days and three nights, not knowing whither to row, when at the dawn of the third day they heard the noise of breakers, and came to an island as soon as the sun was up. Here, ere they could land, they met a swarm of ferocious ants, each the size of a foal, that came down the strand and into the sea to get at them; so they made off quickly, and saw no land for three days more.

### **The Island of the Great Birds**

This was a terraced island, with trees all round it, and great birds sitting on the trees. Maeldūn landed first alone, and carefully searched the island for any evil thing, but finding none, the rest followed him, and killed and ate many of the birds, bringing others on board their boat.

### **The Island of the Fierce Beast**

A great sandy island was this, and on it a beast like a horse, but with clawed feet like a hound's. He flew at them to devour them, but they put off in time, and were pelted by the beast with pebbles from the shore as they rowed away.

### **The Island of the Giant Horses**

A great, flat island, which it fell by lot to Germān and Diuran to explore first. They found a vast green racecourse, on which were the marks of horses' hoofs, each as big as the sail of a ship, and the shells of nuts of monstrous size were lying about, and much plunder. So they were afraid, and took ship hastily again, and from the sea they saw a horse-race in progress and heard the shouting of a great multitude cheering on the white horse or the brown, and saw the giant horses running swifter than the wind.<sup>122</sup> So they rowed away with all their might, thinking they had come upon an assembly of demons.

### **The Island of the Stone Door**

A full week passed, and then they found a great, high island with a house standing on the shore. A door with a valve of stone opened into the sea, and through it the sea-waves kept hurling salmon into the house. Maeldūn and his party entered, and found the house empty of folk, but a great bed lay ready for the chief to whom it belonged, and a bed for each three of his company, and meat and drink beside each bed. Maeldūn and his party ate and drank their fill, and then sailed off again.

### **The Island of the Apples**

By the time they had come here they had been a long time voyaging, and food had failed them, and they were hungry. This island had precipitous sides from which a wood hung down, and as they passed along the cliffs Maeldūn broke off a twig and held it in his hand. Three days and nights they coasted the cliff and found no entrance to the island, but by that time a

cluster of three apples had grown on the end of Maeldūn's rod, and each apple sufficed the crew for forty days.

### **The Island of the Wondrous Beast**

This island had a fence of stone round it, and within the fence a huge beast that raced round and round the island. And anon it went to the top of the island, and then performed a marvellous feat, viz., it turned its body round and round inside its skin, the skin remaining unmoved, while again it would revolve its skin round and round the body. When it saw the party it rushed at them, but they escaped, pelted with stones as they rowed away. One of the stones pierced through Maeldūn's shield and lodged in the keel of the boat.

### **The Island of the Biting Horses**

Here were many great beasts resembling horses, that tore continually pieces of flesh from each other's sides, so that all the island ran with blood. They rowed hastily away, and were now disheartened and full of complaints, for they knew not where they were, nor how to find guidance or aid in their quest.

### **The Island of the Fiery Swine**

With great weariness, hunger, and thirst they arrived at the tenth island, which was full of trees loaded with golden apples. Under the trees went red beasts, like fiery swine, that kicked the trees with their legs, when the apples fell and the beasts consumed them. The beasts came out at morning only, when a multitude of birds left the island, and swam out to sea till nones, when they turned and swam inward again till vespers, and ate the apples all night.

Maeldūn and his comrades landed at night, and felt the soil hot under their feet from the fiery swine in their caverns underground. They collected



all the apples they could, which were good both against hunger and thirst, and loaded their boat with them and put to sea once more, refreshed.

### **The Island of the Little Cat**

The apples had failed them when they came hungry and thirsting to the eleventh island. This was, as it were, a tall white tower of chalk reaching up to the clouds, and on the rampart about it were great houses white as snow. They entered the largest of them, and found no man in it, but a small cat playing on four stone pillars which were in the midst of the house, leaping from one to the other. It looked a little on the Irish warriors, but did not cease from its play. On the walls of the houses there were three rows of objects hanging up, one row of brooches of gold and silver, and one of neck-torques of gold and silver, each as big as the hoop of a cask, and one of great swords with gold and silver hilts. Quilts and shining garments lay in the room, and there, also, were a roasted ox and a flitch of bacon and abundance of liquor. “Hath this been left for us?” said Maeldūn to the cat. It looked at him a moment, and then continued its play. So there they ate and drank and slept, and stored up what remained of the food. Next day, as they made to leave the house, the youngest of Maeldūn's foster-brothers took a necklace from the wall, and was bearing it out when the cat suddenly “leaped through him like a fiery arrow,” and he fell, a heap of ashes, on the floor. Thereupon Maeldūn, who had forbidden the theft of the jewel, soothed the cat and replaced the necklace, and they strewed the ashes of the dead youth on the sea-shore, and put to sea again.

### **The Island of the Black and the White Sheep**

This had a brazen palisade dividing it in two, and a flock of black sheep on one side and of white sheep on the other. Between them was a big man who tended the flocks, and sometimes he put a white sheep among the black, when it became black at once, or a black sheep among the white, when it immediately turned white.<sup>123</sup> By way of an experiment Maeldūn flung a

peeled white wand on the side of the black sheep. It at once turned black, whereat they left the place in terror, and without landing.

### **The Island of the Giant Cattle**

A great and wide island with a herd of huge swine on it. They killed a small pig and roasted it on the spot, as it was too great to carry on board. The island rose up into a very high mountain, and Diuran and Germān went to view the country from the top of it. On their way they met a broad river. To try the depth of the water Germān dipped in the haft of his spear, which at once was consumed as with liquid fire. On the other bank was a huge man guarding what seemed a herd of oxen. He called to them not to disturb the calves, so they went no further and speedily sailed away.

### **The Island of the Mill**

Here they found a great and grim-looking mill, and a giant miller grinding corn in it. "Half the corn of your country," he said, "is ground here. Here comes to be ground all that men begrudge to each other." Heavy and many were the loads they saw going to it, and all that was ground in it was carried away westwards. So they crossed themselves and sailed away.

### **The Island of the Black Mourners**

An island full of black people continually weeping and lamenting. One of the two remaining foster-brothers landed on it, and immediately turned black and fell to weeping like the rest. Two others went to fetch him; the same fate befell them. Four others then went with their heads wrapped in cloths, that they should not look on the land or breathe the air of the place, and they seized two of the lost ones and brought them away perforce, but not the foster-brother. The two rescued ones could not explain their conduct except by saying that they had to do as they saw others doing about them.

### **The Island of the Four Fences**

Four fences of gold, silver, brass, and crystal divided this island into four parts, kings in one, queens in another, warriors in a third, maidens in the fourth.

On landing, a maiden gave them food like cheese, that tasted to each man as he wished it to be, and an intoxicating liquor that put them asleep for three days. When they awoke they were at sea in their boat, and of the island and its inhabitants nothing was to be seen.

### **The Island of the Glass Bridge**

Here we come to one of the most elaborately wrought and picturesque of all the incidents of the voyage. The island they now reached had on it a fortress with a brazen door, and a bridge of glass leading to it. When they sought to cross the bridge it threw them backward.<sup>124</sup> A woman came out of the fortress with a pail in her hand, and lifting from the bridge a slab of glass she let down her pail into the water beneath, and returned to the fortress. They struck on the brazen portcullis before them to gain admittance, but the melody given forth by the smitten metal plunged them in slumber till the morrow morn. Thrice over this happened, the woman each time making an ironical speech about Maeldūn. On the fourth day, however, she came out to them over the bridge, wearing a white mantle with a circlet of gold on her hair, two silver sandals on her rosy feet, and a filmy silken smock next her skin.

“My welcome to thee, O Maeldūn,” she said, and she welcomed each man of the crew by his own name. Then she took them into the great house and allotted a couch to the chief, and one for each three of his men. She gave them abundance of food and drink, all out of her one pail, each man finding in it what he most desired. When she had departed they asked Maeldūn if they should woo the maiden for him. “How would it hurt you to speak with her?” says Maeldūn. They do so, and she replies: “I know not, nor have ever known, what sin is.” Twice over this is repeated. “Tomorrow,” she says at last, “you shall have your answer.” When the morning

breaks, however, they find themselves once more at sea, with no sign of the island or fortress or lady.

### **The Island of the Shouting Birds**

They hear from afar a great cry and chanting, as it were a singing of psalms, and rowing for a day and night they come at last to an island full of birds, black, brown, and speckled, all shouting and speaking. They sail away without landing.

### **The Island of the Anchorite**

Here they found a wooded island full of birds, and on it a solitary man, whose only clothing was his hair. They asked him of his country and kin. He tells them that he was a man of Ireland who had put to sea<sup>125</sup> with a sod of his native country under his feet. God had turned the sod into an island, adding a foot's breadth to it and one tree for every year. The birds are his kith and kin, and they all wait there till Doomsday, miraculously nourished by angels. He entertained them for three nights, and then they sailed away.

### **The Island of the Miraculous Fountain**

This island had a golden rampart, and a soft white soil like down. In it they found another anchorite clothed only in his hair. There was a fountain in it which yields whey or water on Fridays and Wednesdays, milk on Sundays and feasts of martyrs, and ale and wine on the feasts of Apostles, of Mary, of John the Baptist, and on the high tides of the year.

### **The Island of the Smithy**

As they approached this they heard from afar as it were the clanging of a tremendous smithy, and heard men talking of themselves. "Little boys they seem," said one, "in a little trough yonder." They rowed hastily away, but did not turn their boat, so as not to seem to be flying; but after a while a

giant smith came out of the forge holding in his tongs a huge mass of glowing iron, which he cast after them, and all the sea boiled round it, as it fell astern of their boat.

### **The Sea of Clear Glass**

After that they voyaged until they entered a sea that resembled green glass. Such was its purity that the gravel and the sand of the sea were clearly visible through it; and they saw no monsters or beasts therein among the crags, but only the pure gravel and the green sand. For a long space of the day they were voyaging in that sea, and great was its splendour and its beauty.<sup>126</sup>

### **The Undersea Island**

They next found themselves in a sea, thin like mist, that seemed as if it would not support their boat. In the depths they saw roofed fortresses, and a fair land around them. A monstrous beast lodged in a tree there, with droves of cattle about it, and beneath it an armed warrior. In spite of the warrior, the beast ever and anon stretched down a long neck and seized one of the cattle and devoured it. Much dreading lest they should sink through that mist-like sea, they sailed over it and away.

### **The Island of the Prophecy**

When they arrived here they found the water rising in high cliffs round the island, and, looking down, saw on it a crowd of people, who screamed at them, "It is they, it is they," till they were out of breath. Then came a woman and pelted them from below with large nuts, which they gathered and took with them. As they went they heard the folk crying to each other: "Where are they now?" "They are gone away." "They are not." "It is likely," says the tale, "that there was some one concerning whom the islanders had a prophecy that he would ruin their country and expel them from their land."

## **The Island of the Spouting Water**

Here a great stream spouted out of one side of the island and arched over it like a rainbow, falling on the strand at the further side. And when they thrust their spears into the stream above them they brought out salmon from it as much as they would, and the island was filled with the stench of those they could not carry away.

## **The Island of the Silvern Column**

The next wonder to which they came forms one of the most striking and imaginative episodes of the voyage. It was a great silvern column, four-square, rising from the sea. Each of its four sides was as wide as two oar-strokes of the boat. Not a sod of earth was at its foot, but it rose from the boundless ocean and its summit was lost in the sky. From that summit a huge silver net was flung far away into the sea, and through a mesh of that net they sailed. As they did so Diuran hacked away a piece of the net. "Destroy it not," said Maeldūn, "for what we see is the work of mighty men." Diuran said: "For the praise of God's name I do this, that our tale may be believed, and if I reach Ireland again this piece of silver shall be offered by me on the high altar of Armagh." Two ounces and a half it weighed when it was measured afterwards in Armagh.

"And then they heard a voice from the summit of yonder pillar, mighty, clear, and distinct. But they knew not the tongue it spake, or the words it uttered."

## **The Island of the Pedestal**

The next island stood on a foot, or pedestal, which rose from the sea, and they could find no way of access to it. In the base of the pedestal was a door, closed and locked, which they could not open, so they sailed away, having seen and spoken with no one.

## **The Island of the Women**

Here they found the rampart of a mighty dūn, enclosing a mansion. They landed to look on it, and sat on a hillock near by. Within the dūn they saw seventeen maidens busy at preparing a great bath. In a little while a rider, richly clad, came up swiftly on a racehorse, and lighted down and went inside, one of the girls taking the horse. The rider then went into the bath, when they saw that it was a woman. Shortly after that one of the maidens came out and invited them to enter, saying: "The Queen invites you." They went into the fort and bathed, and then sat down to meat, each man with a maiden over against him, and Maeldūn opposite to the queen. And Maeldūn was wedded to the queen, and each of the maidens to one of his men, and at nightfall canopied chambers were allotted to each of them. On the morrow morn they made ready to depart, but the queen would not have them go, and said: "Stay here, and old age will never fall on you, but ye shall remain as ye are now for ever and ever, and what ye had last night ye shall have always. And be no longer a-wandering from island to island on the ocean."

She then told Maeldūn that she was the mother of the seventeen girls they had seen, and her husband had been king of the island. He was now dead, and she reigned in his place. Each day she went into the great plain in the interior of the island to judge the folk, and returned to the dūn at night.

So they remained there for three months of winter; but at the end of that time it seemed they had been there three years, and the men wearied of it, and longed to set forth for their own country.

"What shall we find there," said Maeldūn, "that is better than this?"

But still the people murmured and complained, and at last they said: "Great is the love which Maeldūn has for his woman. Let him stay with her alone if he will, but we will go to our own country." But Maeldūn would not be left after them, and at last one day, when the queen was away judging the folk, they went on board their bark and put out to sea. Before they had gone far, however, the queen came riding up with a clew of twine in her hand, and she flung it after them. Maeldūn caught it in his hand, and it clung to his hand so that he could not free himself, and the queen, holding the other end, drew them back to land. And they stayed on the island another three months.

Twice again the same thing happened, and at last the people averred that Maeldūn held the clew on purpose, so great was his love for the woman. So the next time another man caught the clew, but it clung to his hand as before; so Diuran smote off his hand, and it fell with the clew into the sea. “When she saw that she at once began to wail and shriek, so that all the land was one cry, wailing and shrieking.” And thus they escaped from the Island of the Women.

### **The Island of the Red Berries**

On this island were trees with great red berries which yielded an intoxicating and slumbrous juice. They mingled it with water to moderate its power, and filled their casks with it, and sailed away.

### **The Island of the Eagle**

A large island, with woods of oak and yew on one side of it, and on the other a plain, whereon were herds of sheep, and a little lake in it; and there also they found a small church and a fort, and an ancient grey cleric, clad only in his hair. Maeldūn asked him who he was.

“I am the fifteenth man of the monks of St. Brennan of Birr,” he said. “We went on our pilgrimage into the ocean, and they have all died save me alone.” He showed them the tablet (? calendar) of the Holy Brennan, and they prostrated themselves before it, and Maeldūn kissed it. They stayed there for a season, feeding on the sheep of the island.

One day they saw what seemed to be a cloud coming up from the southwest. As it drew near, however, they saw the waving of pinions, and perceived that it was an enormous bird. It came into the island, and, alighting very wearily on a hill near the lake, it began eating the red berries, like grapes, which grew on a huge tree-branch as big as a full-grown oak, that it had brought with it, and the juice and fragments of the berries fell into the lake, reddening all the water. Fearful that it would seize them in its talons and bear them out to sea, they lay hid in the woods and watched it.



After a while, however, Maeldūn went out to the foot of the hill, but the bird did him no harm, and then the rest followed cautiously behind their shields, and one of them gathered the berries off the branch which the bird held in its talons, but it did them no evil, and regarded them not at all. And they saw that it was very old, and its plumage dull and decayed.

At the hour of noon two eagles came up from the south-west and alit in front of the great bird, and after resting awhile they set to work picking off the insects that infested its jaws and eyes and ears. This they continued till vespers, when all three ate of the berries again. At last, on the following day, when the great bird had been completely cleansed, it plunged into the lake, and again the two eagles picked and cleansed it. Till the third day the great bird remained preening and shaking its pinions, and its feathers became glossy and abundant, and then, soaring upwards, it flew thrice round the island, and away to the quarter whence it had come, and its flight was now swift and strong; whence it was manifest to them that this had been its renewal from old age to youth, according as the prophet said, *Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's*.<sup>127</sup>

Then Diuran said: "Let us bathe in that lake and renew ourselves where the bird hath been renewed." "Nay," said another, "for the bird hath left his venom in it." But Diuran plunged in and drank of the water. From that time so long as he lived his eyes were strong and keen, and not a tooth fell from his jaw nor a hair from his head, and he never knew illness or infirmity.

Thereafter they bade farewell to the anchorite, and fared forth on the ocean once more.

### **The Island of the Laughing Folk**

Here they found a great company of men laughing and playing incessantly. They drew lots as to who should enter and explore it, and it fell to Maeldūn's foster-brother. But when he set foot on it he at once began to laugh and play with the others, and could not leave off, nor would he come back to his comrades. So they left him and sailed away.<sup>128</sup>

## **The Island of the Flaming Rampart**

They now came in sight of an island which was not large, and it had about it a rampart of flame that circled round and round it continually. In one part of the rampart there was an opening, and when this opening came opposite to them they saw through it the whole island, and saw those who dwelt therein, even men and women, beautiful, many, and wearing adorned garments, with vessels of gold in their hands. And the festal music which they made came to the ears of the wanderers. For a long time they lingered there, watching this marvel, “and they deemed it delightful to behold.”

## **The Island of the Monk of Tory**

Far off among the waves they saw what they took to be a white bird on the water. Drawing near to it they found it to be an aged man clad only in the white hair of his body, and he was throwing himself in prostrations on a broad rock.

“From Torach<sup>129</sup> I have come hither,” he said, “and there I was reared. I was cook in the monastery there, and the food of the Church I used to sell for myself, so that I had at last much treasure of raiment and brazen vessels and gold-bound books and all that man desires. Great was my pride and arrogance.

“One day as I dug a grave in which to bury a churl who had been brought on to the island, a voice came from below where a holy man lay buried, and he said: ‘Put not the corpse of a sinner on me, a holy, pious person!’”

After a dispute the monk buried the corpse elsewhere, and was promised an eternal reward for doing so. Not long thereafter he put to sea in a boat with all his accumulated treasures, meaning apparently to escape from the island with his plunder. A great wind blew him far out to sea, and when he was out of sight of land the boat stood still in one place. He saw near him a man (angel) sitting on the wave. “Whither goest thou?” said the man. “On a pleasant way, whither I am now looking,” said the monk. “It

would not be pleasant to thee if thou knewest what is around thee,” said the man. “So far as eye can see there is one crowd of demons all gathered around thee, because of thy covetousness and pride, and theft, and other evil deeds. Thy boat hath stopped, nor will it move until thou do my will, and the fires of hell shall get hold of thee.”

He came near to the boat, and laid his hand on the arm of the fugitive, who promised to do his will.

“Fling into the sea,” he said, “all the wealth that is in thy boat.”

“It is a pity,” said the monk, “that it should go to loss.”

“It shall in nowise go to loss. There will be one man whom thou wilt profit.”

The monk thereupon flung everything into the sea save one little wooden cup, and he cast away oars and rudder. The man gave him a provision of whey and seven cakes, and bade him abide wherever his boat should stop. The wind and waves carried him hither and thither till at last the boat came to rest upon the rock where the wanderers found him. There was nothing there but the bare rock, but remembering what he was bidden he stepped out upon a little ledge over which the waves washed, and the boat immediately left him, and the rock was enlarged for him. There he remained seven years, nourished by otters which brought him salmon out of the sea, and even flaming firewood on which to cook them, and his cup was filled with good liquor every day. “And neither wet nor heat nor cold affects me in this place.”

At the noon hour miraculous nourishment was brought for the whole crew, and thereafter the ancient man said to them:

“Ye will all reach your country, and the man that slew thy father, O Maeldūn, ye will find him in a fortress before you. And slay him not, but forgive him; because God hath saved you from manifold great perils, and ye too are men deserving of death.”

Then they bade him farewell and went on their accustomed way.

## **The Island of the Falcon**

This is uninhabited save for herds of sheep and oxen. They land on it and eat their fill, and one of them sees there a large falcon. "This falcon," he says, "is like the falcons of Ireland." "Watch it," says Maeldūn, "and see how it will go from us." It flew off to the south-east, and they rowed after it all day till vespers.

## **The Home-coming**

At nightfall they sighted a land like Ireland; and soon came to a small island, where they ran their prow ashore. It was the island where dwelt the man who had slain Ailill.

They went up to the dūn that was on the island, and heard men talking within it as they sat at meat. One man said:

"It would be ill for us if we saw Maeldūn now."

"That Maeldūn has been drowned," said another.

"Maybe it is he who shall waken you from sleep to-night," said a third.

"If he should come now," said a fourth, "what should we do?"

"Not hard to answer that," said the chief of them. "Great welcome should he have if he were to come, for he hath been a long space in great tribulation."

Then Maeldūn smote with the wooden clapper against the door. "Who is there?" asked the doorkeeper.

"Maeldūn is here," said he.

They entered the house in peace, and great welcome was made for them, and they were arrayed in new garments. And then they told the story of all the marvels that God had shown them, according to the words of the "sacred poet," who said, *Haec olim meminisse juvabit*.<sup>130</sup>

Then Maeldūn went to his own home and kindred, and Diuran the Rhymer took with him the piece of silver that he had hewn from the net of the pillar, and laid it on the high altar of Armagh in triumph and exultation at the miracles that God had wrought for them. And they told again the story of all that had befallen them, and all the marvels they had seen by sea and land, and the perils they had endured.

The story ends with the following words:

“Now Aed the Fair (Aed Finn<sup>131</sup>), chief sage of Ireland, arranged this story as it standeth here; and he did so for a delight to the mind, and for the folks of Ireland after him.”

# Myths and Tales of the Cymry

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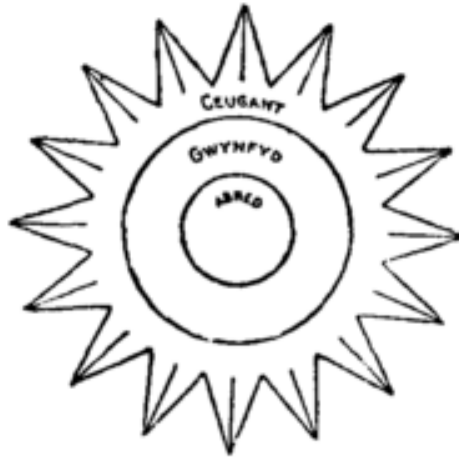
## Bardic Philosophy

The absence in early Celtic literature of any world-myth, or any philosophic account of the origin and constitution of things, was noticed at the opening of our third chapter. In Gaelic literature there is, as far as I know, nothing which even pretends to represent early Celtic thought on this subject. It is otherwise in Wales. Here there has existed for a considerable time a body of teaching purporting to contain a portion, at any rate, of that ancient Druidic thought which, as Caesar tells us, was communicated only to the initiated, and never written down. This teaching is principally to be found in two volumes entitled “Barddas,” a compilation made from materials in his possession by a Welsh bard and scholar named Llewellyn Sion, of Glamorgan, towards the end of the sixteenth century, and edited, with a translation, by J.A. Williams ap Ithel for the Welsh MS. Society. Modern Celtic scholars pour contempt on the pretensions of works like this to enshrine any really antique thought. Thus Mr. Ivor B. John: “All idea of a bardic esoteric doctrine involving pre-Christian mythic philosophy must be utterly discarded.” And again: “The nonsense talked upon the subject is largely due to the uncritical invention of pseudo-antiquaries of the sixteenth to seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.”<sup>132</sup> Still the bardic Order was certainly at one time in possession of such a doctrine. That Order had a fairly continuous existence in Wales. And though no critical thinker would build with any confidence a theory of pre-Christian doctrine on a document of the sixteenth century, it does not seem wise to scout altogether the possibility that some fragments of antique lore may have lingered even so late as that in bardic tradition.

At any rate, “Barddas” is a work of considerable philosophic interest, and even if it represents nothing but a certain current of Cymric thought in the sixteenth century it is not unworthy of attention by the student of things

Celtic. Purely Druidic it does not even profess to be, for Christian personages and episodes from Christian history figure largely in it. But we come occasionally upon a strain of thought which, whatever else it may be, is certainly not Christian, and speaks of an independent philosophic system.

In this system two primary existences are contemplated, God and Cythrawl, who stand respectively for the principle of energy tending towards life, and the principle of destruction tending towards nothingness. Cythrawl is realised in Annwn,<sup>133</sup> which may be rendered, the Abyss, or Chaos. In the beginning there was nothing but God and Annwn. Organised life began by the Word—God pronounced His ineffable Name and the “Manred” was formed. The Manred was the primal substance of the universe. It was conceived as a multitude of minute indivisible particles—atoms, in fact—each being a microcosm, for God is complete in each of them, while at the same time each is a part of God, the Whole. The totality of being as it now exists is represented by three concentric circles. The innermost of them, where life sprang from Annwn, is called “Abred,” and is the stage of struggle and evolution—the contest of life with Cythrawl. The next is the circle of “Gwynfyd,” or Purity, in which life is manifested as a pure, rejoicing force, having attained its triumph over evil. The last and outermost circle is called “Ceugant,” or Infinity. Here all predicates fail us, and this circle, represented graphically not by a bounding line, but by divergent rays, is inhabited by God alone. The following extract from “Barddas,” in which the alleged bardic teaching is conveyed in catechism form, will serve to show the order of ideas in which the writer's mind moved:



### The Circles of Being

“Q. Whence didst thou proceed?

“A. I came from the Great World, having my beginning in Annwn.

“Q. Where art thou now? and how camest thou to what thou art?

“A. I am in the Little World, whither I came having traversed the circle of Abred, and now I am a Man, at its termination and extreme limits.

“Q. What wert thou before thou didst become a man, in the circle of Abred?

“A. I was in Annwn the least possible that was capable of life and the nearest possible to absolute death; and I came in every form and through every form capable of a body and life to the state of man along the circle of Abred, where my condition was severe and grievous during the age of ages, ever since I was parted in Annwn from the dead, by the gift of God, and His great generosity, and His unlimited and endless love.

“Q. Through how many different forms didst thou come, and what happened unto thee?”

“A. Through every form capable of life, in water, in earth, in air. And there happened unto me every severity, every hardship, every evil, and every suffering, and but little was the goodness or Gwynfyd before I became a man.... Gwynfyd cannot be obtained without seeing and knowing everything, but it is not possible to see or to know everything without suffering everything.... And there can be no full and perfect love that does



not produce those things which are necessary to lead to the knowledge that causes Gwynfyd.”

Every being, we are told, shall attain to the circle of Gwynfyd at last.<sup>134</sup>

There is much here that reminds us of Gnostic or Oriental thought. It is certainly very unlike Christian orthodoxy of the sixteenth century. As a product of the Cymric mind of that period the reader may take it for what it is worth, without troubling himself either with antiquarian theories or with their refutations.

Let us now turn to the really ancient work, which is not philosophic, but creative and imaginative, produced by British bards and fabulists of the Middle Ages. But before we go on to set forth what we shall find in this literature we must delay a moment to discuss one thing which we shall not.

## **The Arthurian Saga**

For the majority of modern readers who have not made any special study of the subject, the mention of early British legend will inevitably call up the glories of the Arthurian Saga—they will think of the fabled palace at Caerleon-on-Usk, the Knights of the Round Table riding forth on chivalrous adventure, the Quest of the Grail, the guilty love of Lancelot, flower of knighthood, for the queen, the last great battle by the northern sea, the voyage of Arthur, sorely wounded, but immortal, to the mystic valley of Avalon. But as a matter of fact they will find in the native literature of mediæval Wales little or nothing of all this—no Round Table, no Lancelot, no Grail-Quest, no Isle of Avalon, until the Welsh learned about them from abroad; and though there was indeed an Arthur in this literature, he is a wholly different being from the Arthur of what we now call the Arthurian Saga.

## **Nennius**

The earliest extant mention of Arthur is to be found in the work of the British historian Nennius, who wrote his “*Historia Britonum*” about the

year 800. He derives his authority from various sources—ancient monuments and writings of Britain and of Ireland (in connexion with the latter country he records the legend of Partholan), Roman annals, and chronicles of saints, especially St. Germanus. He presents a fantastically Romanised and Christianised view of British history, deriving the Britons from a Trojan and Roman ancestry. His account of Arthur, however, is both sober and brief. Arthur, who, according to Nennius, lived in the sixth century, was not a king; his ancestry was less noble than that of many other British chiefs, who, nevertheless, for his great talents as a military *Imperator*, or *dux bellorum*, chose him for their leader against the Saxons, whom he defeated in twelve battles, the last being at Mount Badon. Arthur's office was doubtless a relic of Roman military organisation, and there is no reason to doubt his historical existence, however impenetrable may be the veil which now obscures his valiant and often triumphant battlings for order and civilisation in that disastrous age.

### **Geoffrey of Monmouth**

Next we have Geoffrey of Monmouth, Bishop of St. Asaph, who wrote his “*Historia Regum Britanniae*” in South Wales in the early part of the twelfth century. This work is an audacious attempt to make sober history out of a mass of mythical or legendary matter mainly derived, if we are to believe the author, from an ancient book brought by his uncle Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, from Brittany. The mention of Brittany in this connexion is, as we shall see, very significant. Geoffrey wrote expressly to commemorate the exploits of Arthur, who now appears as a king, son of Uther Pendragon and of Igerna, wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, to whom Uther gained access in the shape of her husband through the magic arts of Merlin. He places the beginning of Arthur's reign in the year 505, recounts his wars against the Saxons, and says he ultimately conquered not only all Britain, but Ireland, Norway, Gaul, and Dacia, and successfully resisted a demand for tribute and homage from the Romans. He held his court at Caerleon-on-Usk. While he was away on the Continent carrying on his struggle with

Rome his nephew Modred usurped his crown and wedded his wife Guanhumara. Arthur, on this, returned, and after defeating the traitor at Winchester slew him in a last battle in Cornwall, where Arthur himself was sorely wounded (A.D. 542). The queen retired to a convent at Caerleon. Before his death Arthur conferred his kingdom on his kinsman Constantine, and was then carried off mysteriously to “the isle of Avalon” to be cured, and “the rest is silence.” Arthur's magic sword “Caliburn” (Welsh *Caladfwlch*; see p. 224, note) is mentioned by Geoffrey and described as having been made in Avalon, a word which seems to imply some kind of fairyland, a Land of the Dead, and may be related to the Norse *Valhall*. It was not until later times that Avalon came to be identified with an actual site in Britain (Glastonbury). In Geoffrey's narrative there is nothing about the Holy Grail, or Lancelot, or the Round Table, and except for the allusion to Avalon the mystical element of the Arthurian saga is absent. Like Nennius, Geoffrey finds a fantastic classical origin for the Britons. His so-called history is perfectly worthless as a record of fact, but it has proved a veritable mine for poets and chroniclers, and has the distinction of having furnished the subject for the earliest English tragic drama, “Gorboduc,” as well as for Shakespeare's “King Lear”; and its author may be described as the father—at least on its quasi-historical side—of the Arthurian saga, which he made up partly out of records of the historical *dux bellorum* of Nennius and partly out of poetical amplifications of these records made in Brittany by the descendants of exiles from Wales, many of whom fled there at the very time when Arthur was waging his wars against the heathen Saxons. Geoffrey's book had a wonderful success. It was speedily translated into French by Wace, who wrote “Li Romans de Brut” about 1155, with added details from Breton sources, and translated from Wace's French into Anglo-Saxon by Layamon, who thus anticipated Malory's adaptations of late French prose romances. Except a few scholars who protested unavailingly, no one doubted its strict historical truth, and it had the important effect of giving to early British history a new dignity in the estimation of Continental and of English princes. To sit upon the throne of

Arthur was regarded as in itself a glory by Plantagenet monarchs who had not a trace of Arthur's or of any British blood.

### **The Saga in Brittany: Marie de France**

The Breton sources must next be considered. Unfortunately, not a line of ancient Breton literature has come down to us, and for our knowledge of it we must rely on the appearances it makes in the work of French writers. One of the earliest of these is the Anglo-Norman poetess who called herself Marie de France, and who wrote about 1150 and afterwards. She wrote, among other things, a number of “Lais,” or tales, which she explicitly and repeatedly tells us were translated or adapted from Breton sources. Sometimes she claims to have rendered a writer's original exactly:

“Les contes que jo sai verais  
Dunt li Bretun unt fait les lais  
Vos conterai assez briefment;  
Et cieuf (sauf) di cest coumencement  
Selunc la lettre è l'escriture.”

Little is actually said about Arthur in these tales, but the events of them are placed in his time—*en cel tems tint Artus la terre*—and the allusions, which include a mention of the Round Table, evidently imply a general knowledge of the subject among those to whom these Breton “Lais” were addressed. Lancelot is not mentioned, but there is a “Lai” about one Lanval, who is beloved by Arthur's queen, but rejects her because he has a fairy mistress in the “isle d'Avalon.” Gawain is mentioned, and an episode is told in the “Lai de Chevrefoil” about Tristan and Iseult, whose maid, “Brangien,” is referred to in a way which assumes that the audience knew the part she had played on Iseult's bridal night. In short, we have evidence here of the existence in Brittany of a well-diffused and well-developed body of chivalric legend gathered about the personality of Arthur. The legends are so well known that mere allusions to characters and episodes in them are as well understood as references to Tennyson's “Idylls” would be among

us to-day. The “Lais” of Marie de France therefore point strongly to Brittany as the true cradle of the Arthurian saga, on its chivalrous and romantic side. They do not, however, mention the Grail.

### **Chrestien de Troyes**

Lastly, and chiefly, we have the work of the French poet Chrestien de Troyes, who began in 1165 to translate Breton “Lais,” like Marie de France, and who practically brought the Arthurian saga into the poetic literature of Europe, and gave it its main outline and character. He wrote a “Tristan” (now lost). He (if not Walter Map) introduced Lancelot of the Lake into the story; he wrote a *Conte del Graal*, in which the Grail legend and Perceval make their first appearance, though he left the story unfinished, and does not tell us what the “Grail” really was.<sup>135</sup> He also wrote a long *conte d'aventure* entitled “Erec,” containing the story of Geraint and Enid. These are the earliest poems we possess in which the Arthur of chivalric legend comes prominently forward. What were the sources of Chrestien? No doubt they were largely Breton. Troyes is in Champagne, which had been united to Blois in 1019 by Eudes, Count of Blois, and reunited again after a period of dispossession by Count Theobald de Blois in 1128. Marie, Countess of Champagne, was Chrestien's patroness. And there were close connexions between the ruling princes of Blois and of Brittany. Alain II., a Duke of Brittany, had in the tenth century married a sister of the Count de Blois, and in the first quarter of the thirteenth century Jean I. of Brittany married Blanche de Champagne, while their daughter Alix married Jean de Chastillon, Count of Blois, in 1254. It is highly probable, therefore, that through minstrels who attended their Breton lords at the court of Blois, from the middle of the tenth century onward, a great many Breton “Lais” and legends found their way into French literature during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. But it is also certain that the Breton legends themselves had been strongly affected by French influences, and that to the *Matière de France*, as it was called by mediæval writers<sup>136</sup>—*i.e.*,

the legends of Charlemagne and his Paladins—we owe the Table Round and the chivalric institutions ascribed to Arthur's court at Caerleon-on-Usk.

### **Bleheris**

It must not be forgotten that (as Miss Jessie L. Weston has emphasised in her invaluable studies on the Arthurian saga) Gautier de Denain, the earliest of the continuators or re-workers of Chrestien de Troyes, mentions as his authority for stories of Gawain one Bleheris, a poet “born and bred in Wales.” This forgotten bard is believed to be identical with *famosus ille fabulator, Bledhericus*, mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis, and with the Bréris quoted by Thomas of Brittany as an authority for the Tristan story.

### **Conclusion as to the Origin of the Arthurian Saga**

In the absence, however, of any information as to when, or exactly what, Bleheris wrote, the opinion must, I think, hold the field that the Arthurian saga, as we have it now, is not of Welsh, nor even of pure Breton origin. The Welsh exiles who colonised part of Brittany about the sixth century must have brought with them many stories of the historical Arthur. They must also have brought legends of the Celtic deity Artaius, a god to whom altars have been found in France. These personages ultimately blended into one, even as in Ireland the Christian St. Brigit blended with the pagan goddess Brigindo.<sup>137</sup> We thus get a mythical figure combining something of the exaltation of a god with a definite habitation on earth and a place in history. An Arthur saga thus arose, which in its Breton (though not its Welsh) form was greatly enriched by material drawn in from the legends of Charlemagne and his peers, while both in Brittany and in Wales it became a centre round which clustered a mass of floating legendary matter relating to various Celtic personages, human and divine. Chrestien de Troyes, working on Breton material, ultimately gave it the form in which it conquered the world, and in which it became in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries

what the Faust legend was in later times, the accepted vehicle for the ideals and aspirations of an epoch.

## **The Saga in Wales**

From the Continent, and especially from Brittany, the story of Arthur came back into Wales transformed and glorified. The late Dr. Heinrich Zimmer, in one of his luminous studies of the subject, remarks that “In Welsh literature we have definite evidence that the South-Welsh prince, Rhys ap Tewdwr, who had been in Brittany, brought from thence in the year 1070 the knowledge of Arthur's Round Table to Wales, where of course it had been hitherto unknown.”<sup>138</sup> And many Breton lords are known to have followed the banner of William the Conqueror into England.<sup>139</sup> The introducers of the saga into Wales found, however, a considerable body of Arthurian matter of a very different character already in existence there. Besides the traditions of the historical Arthur, the *dux bellorum* of Nennius, there was the Celtic deity, Artaius. It is probably a reminiscence of this deity whom we meet with under the name of Arthur in the only genuine Welsh Arthurian story we possess, the story of Kilhwch and Olwen in the “Mabinogion.” Much of the Arthurian saga derived from Chrestien and other Continental writers was translated and adapted in Wales as in other European countries, but as a matter of fact it made a later and a lesser impression in Wales than almost anywhere else. It conflicted with existing Welsh traditions, both historical and mythological; it was full of matter entirely foreign to the Welsh spirit, and it remained always in Wales something alien and unassimilated. Into Ireland it never entered at all.

These few introductory remarks do not, of course, profess to contain a discussion of the Arthurian saga—a vast subject with myriad ramifications, historical, mythological, mystical, and what not—but are merely intended to indicate the relation of that saga to genuine Celtic literature and to explain why we shall hear so little of it in the following accounts of Cymric myths and legends. It was a great spiritual myth which, arising from the composite source above described, overran all the Continent, as its hero was

supposed to have done in armed conquest, but it cannot be regarded as a special possession of Celts, nor is it at present extant, except in the form of translation or adaptation, in any Celtic tongue.

### **Gaelic and Cymric Legend Compared**

The myths and legends of the Celtic race which have come down to us in the Welsh language are in some respects of a different character from those which we possess in Gaelic. The Welsh material is nothing like as full as the Gaelic, nor so early. The tales of the “Mabinogion” are mainly drawn from the fourteenth-century manuscript entitled “The Red Book of Hergest.” One of them, the romance of Taliesin, came from another source, a manuscript of the seventeenth century. The four oldest tales in the “Mabinogion” are supposed by scholars to have taken their present shape in the tenth or eleventh century, while several Irish tales, like the story of Etain and Midir or the Death of Conary, go back to the seventh or eighth. It will be remembered that the story of the invasion of Partholan was known to Nennius, who wrote about the year 800. As one might therefore expect, the mythological elements in the Welsh romances are usually much more confused and harder to decipher than in the earlier of the Irish tales. The mythic interest has grown less, the story interest greater; the object of the bard is less to hand down a sacred text than to entertain a prince's court. We must remember also that the influence of the Continental romances of chivalry is clearly perceptible in the Welsh tales; and, in fact, comes eventually to govern them completely.

### **Gaelic and Continental Romance**

In many respects the Irish Celt anticipated the ideas of these romances. The lofty courtesy shown to each other by enemies,<sup>140</sup> the fantastic pride which forbade a warrior to take advantage of a wounded adversary,<sup>141</sup> the extreme punctilio with which the duties or observances proper to each man's caste or station were observed<sup>142</sup>—all this tone of thought and feeling which would



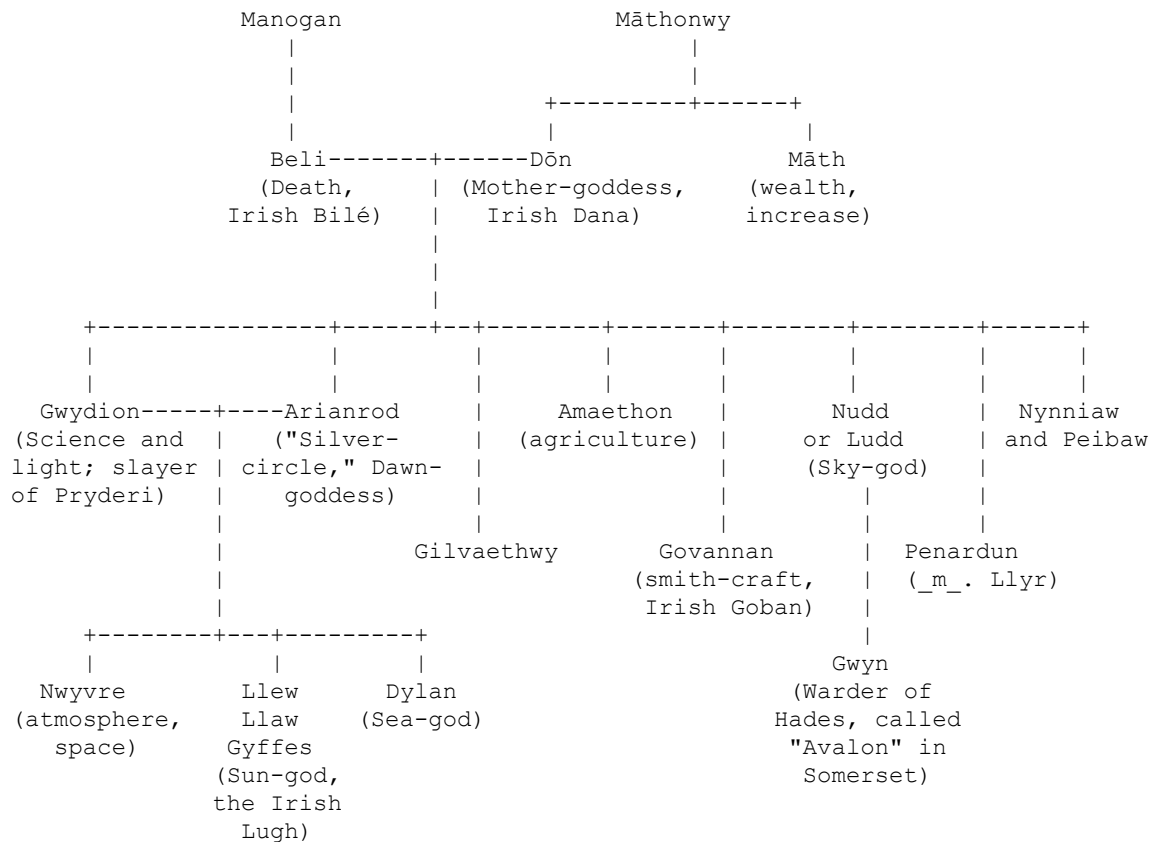
seem so strange to us if we met an instance of it in classical literature would seem quite familiar and natural in Continental romances of the twelfth and later centuries. Centuries earlier than that it was a marked feature in Gaelic literature. Yet in the Irish romances, whether Ultonian or Ossianic, the element which has since been considered the most essential motive in a romantic tale is almost entirely lacking. This is the element of love, or rather of woman-worship. The Continental fabulist felt that he could do nothing without this motive of action. But the “lady-love” of the English, French, or German knight, whose favour he wore, for whose grace he endured infinite hardship and peril, does not meet us in Gaelic literature. It would have seemed absurd to the Irish Celt to make the plot of a serious story hinge on the kind of passion with which the mediaeval Dulcinea inspired her faithful knight. In the two most famous and popular of Gaelic love-tales, the tale of Deirdre and “The Pursuit of Dermot and Grania,” the women are the wooers, and the men are most reluctant to commit what they know to be the folly of yielding to them. Now this romantic, chivalric kind of love, which idealised woman into a goddess, and made the service of his lady a sacred duty to the knight, though it never reached in Wales the height which it did in Continental and English romances, is yet clearly discernible there. We can trace it in “Killhwch and Olwen,” which is comparatively an ancient tale. It is well developed in later stories like “Peredur” and “The Lady of the Fountain.” It is a symptom of the extent to which, in comparison with the Irish, Welsh literature had lost its pure Celtic strain and become affected—I do not, of course, say to its loss—by foreign influences.

### **Gaelic and Cymric Mythology: Nudd**

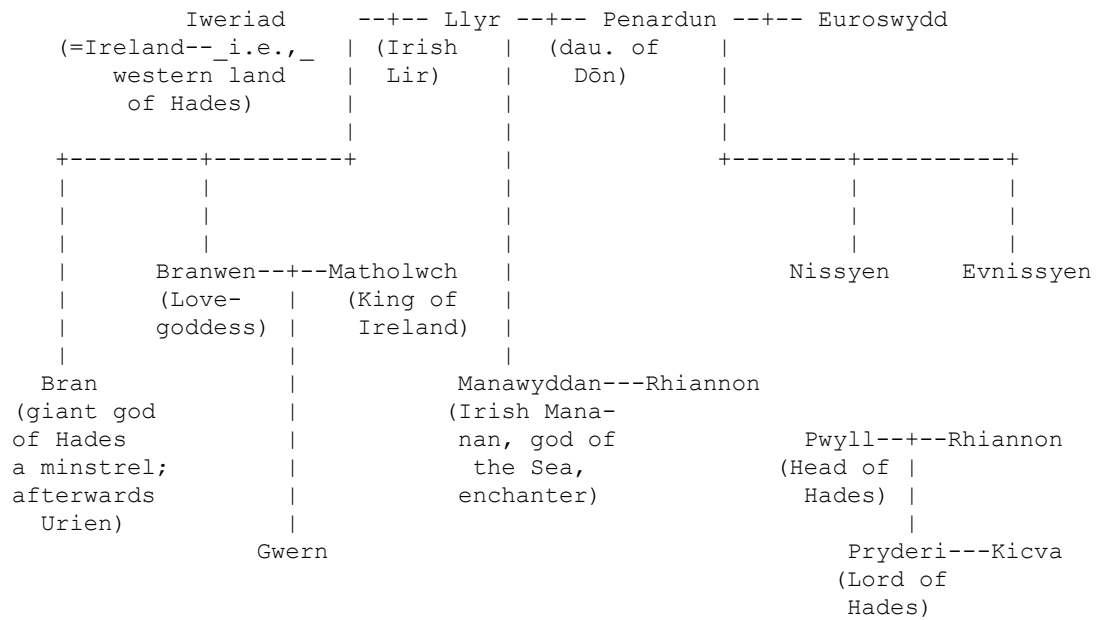
The oldest of the Welsh tales, those called “The Four Branches of the Mabinogi,”<sup>143</sup> are the richest in mythological elements, but these occur in more or less recognisable form throughout nearly all the mediaeval tales, and even, after many transmutations, in Malory. We can clearly discern certain mythological figures common to all Celtica. We meet, for instance, a personage called Nudd or Lludd, evidently a solar deity. A temple dating

from Roman times, and dedicated to him under the name of Nodens, has been discovered at Lydney, by the Severn. On a bronze plaque found near the spot is a representation of the god. He is encircled by a halo and accompanied by flying spirits and by Tritons. We are reminded of the Danaan deities and their close connexion with the sea; and when we find that in Welsh legend an epithet is attached to Nudd, meaning “of the Silver Hand” (though no extant Welsh legend tells the meaning of the epithet), we have no difficulty in identifying this Nudd with Nuada of the Silver Hand, who led the Danaans in the battle of Moytura.<sup>144</sup> Under his name Lludd he is said to have had a temple on the site of St. Paul's in London, the entrance to which, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, was called in the British tongue *Parth Lludd*, which the Saxons translated *Ludes Geat*, our present Ludgate.

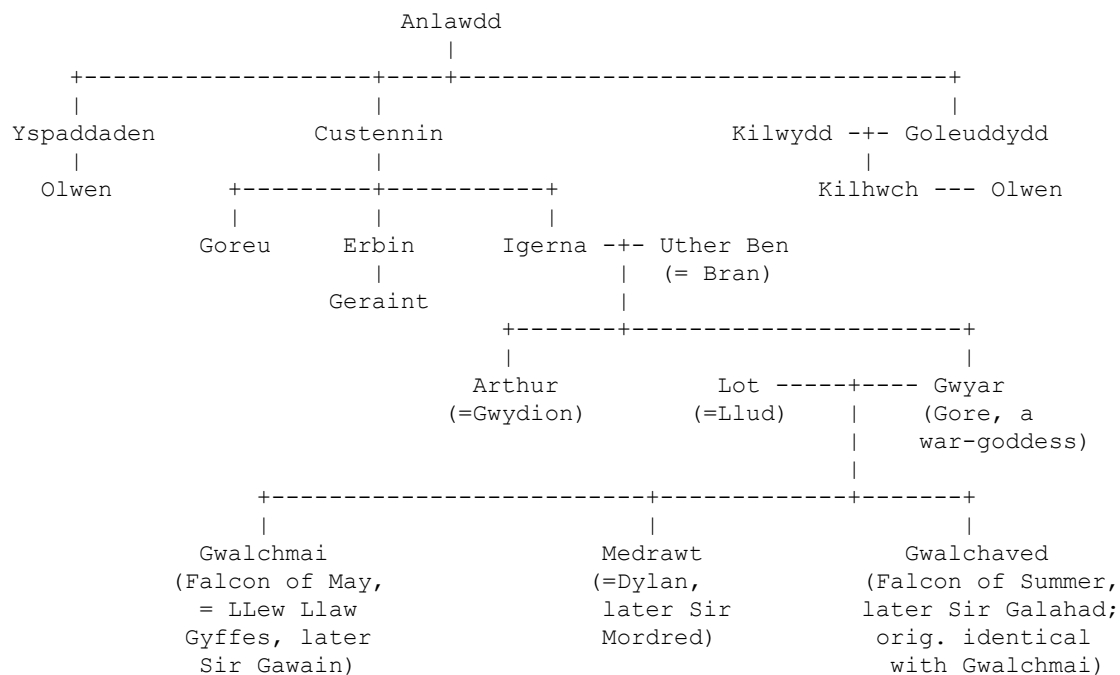
### Gods of the House of Dōn



## Gods of the House Of Llyr



## Arthur and his Kin



## **Llyr and Manawyddan**

Again, when we find a mythological personage named Llyr, with a son named Manawyddan, playing a prominent part in Welsh legend, we may safely connect them with the Irish Lir and his son Mananan, gods of the sea. Llyr-cester, now Leicester, was a centre of the worship of Llyr.

## **Llew Llaw Gyffes**

Finally, we may point to a character in the “Mabinogi,” or tale, entitled “Māth Son of Māthonwy.” The name of this character is given as Llew Llaw Gyffes, which the Welsh fabulist interprets as “The Lion of the Sure Hand,” and a tale, which we shall recount later on, is told to account for the name. But when we find that this hero exhibits characteristics which point to his being a solar deity, such as an amazingly rapid growth from childhood into manhood, and when we are told, moreover, by Professor Rhys that Gyffes originally meant, not “steady” or “sure,” but “long,”<sup>145</sup> it becomes evident that we have here a dim and broken reminiscence of the deity whom the Gaels called Lugh of the Long Arm,<sup>146</sup> *Lugh Lamh Fada*. The misunderstood name survived, and round the misunderstanding legendary matter floating in the popular mind crystallised itself in a new story.

These correspondences might be pursued in much further detail. It is enough here to point to their existence as evidence of the original community of Gaelic and Cymric mythology.<sup>147</sup> We are, in each literature, in the same circle of mythological ideas. In Wales, however, these ideas are harder to discern; the figures and their relationships in the Welsh Olympus are less accurately defined and more fluctuating. It would seem as if a number of different tribes embodied what were fundamentally the same conceptions under different names and wove different legends about them. The bardic literature, as we have it now, bears evidence sometimes of the prominence of one of these tribal cults, sometimes of another. To reduce

these varying accounts to unity is altogether impossible. Still, we can do something to afford the reader a clue to the maze.

### **The Houses of Dōn and of Llyr**

Two great divine houses or families are discernible—that of Dōn, a mother-goddess (representing the Gaelic Dana), whose husband is Beli, the Irish Bilé, god of Death, and whose descendants are the Children of Light; and the House of Llyr, the Gaelic Lir, who here represents, not a Danaan deity, but something more like the Irish Fomorians. As in the case of the Irish myth, the two families are allied by intermarriage—Penardun, a daughter of Dōn, is wedded to Llyr. Dōn herself has a brother, Māth, whose name signifies wealth or treasure (*cf.* Greek Pluton, *ploutos*), and they descend from a figure indistinctly characterised, called Māthonwy.

### **The House of Arthur**

Into the pantheon of deities represented in the four ancient Mabinogi there came, at a later time, from some other tribal source, another group headed by Arthur, the god Artaius. He takes the place of Gwydion son of Dōn, and the other deities of his circle fall more or less accurately into the places of others of the earlier circle. The accompanying genealogical plans are intended to help the reader to a general view of the relationships and attributes of these personages. It must be borne in mind, however, that these tabular arrangements necessarily involve an appearance of precision and consistency which is not reflected in the fluctuating character of the actual myths taken as a whole. Still, as a sketch-map of a very intricate and obscure region, they may help the reader who enters it for the first time to find his bearings in it, and that is the only purpose they propose to serve.

### **Gwyn ap Nudd**

The deity named Gwyn ap Nudd is said, like Finn in Gaelic legend,<sup>148</sup> to have impressed himself more deeply and lastingly on the Welsh popular

imagination than any of the other divinities. A mighty warrior and huntsman, he glories in the crash of breaking spears, and, like Odin, assembles the souls of dead heroes in his shadowy kingdom, for although he belongs to the kindred of the Light-gods, Hades is his special domain. The combat between him and Gwythur ap Greidawl (Victor, son of Scorchers) for Creudylad, daughter of Lludd, which is to be renewed every May-day till time shall end, represents evidently the contest between winter and summer for the flowery and fertile earth. "Later," writes Mr. Charles Squire, "he came to be considered as King of the *Tylwyth Teg*, the Welsh fairies, and his name as such has hardly yet died out of his last haunt, the romantic vale of Neath.... He is the Wild Huntsman of Wales and the West of England, and it is his pack which is sometimes heard at chase in waste places by night."<sup>149</sup> He figures as a god of war and death in a wonderful poem from the "Black Book of Caermarthen," where he is represented as discoursing with a prince named Gwyddneu Garanhir, who had come to ask his protection. I quote a few stanzas: the poem will be found in full in Mr. Squire's excellent volume:

"I come from battle and conflict  
With a shield in my hand;  
Broken is my helmet by the thrusting of spears.

"Round-hoofed is my horse, the torment of battle,  
Fairy am I called,<sup>150</sup> Gwyn the son of Nudd,  
The lover of Crewrdilad, the daughter of Lludd

"I have been in the place where Gwendolen was slain,  
The son of Ceidaw, the pillar of song,  
Where the ravens screamed over blood.

"I have been in the place where Bran was killed,  
The son of Iweridd, of far-extending fame,  
Where the ravens of the battlefield screamed.

“I have been where Llacheu was slain,  
The son of Arthur, extolled in songs,  
When the ravens screamed over blood.

“I have been where Mewrig was killed,  
The son of Carreian, of honourable fame,  
When the ravens screamed over flesh.

“I have been where Gwallawg was killed,  
The son of Goholeth, the accomplished,  
The resister of Lloegyr,<sup>151</sup> the son of Lleynawg.

“I have been where the soldiers of Britain were slain,  
From the east to the north:  
I am the escort of the grave.

“I have been where the soldiers of Britain were slain,  
From the east to the south:  
I am alive, they in death.”

### **Myrddin, or Merlin**

A deity named Myrddin holds in Arthur's mythological cycle the place of the Sky- and Sun-god, Nudd. One of the Welsh Triads tells us that Britain, before it was inhabited, was called *Clas Myrddin*, Myrddin's Enclosure. One is reminded of the Irish fashion of calling any favoured spot a “cattle-fold of the sun”—the name is applied by Deirdre to her beloved Scottish home in Glen Etive. Professor Rhys suggests that Myrddin was the deity specially worshipped at Stonehenge, which, according to British tradition as reported by Geoffrey of Monmouth, was erected by “Merlin,” the enchanter who represents the form into which Myrddin had dwindled under Christian influences. We are told that the abode of Merlin was a house of glass, or a bush of whitethorn laden with bloom, or a sort of smoke or mist in the air, or “a close neither of iron nor steel nor timber nor of stone, but of the air

without any other thing, by enchantment so strong that it may never be undone while the world endureth.”<sup>152</sup> Finally he descended upon Bardsey Island, “off the extreme westernmost point of Carnarvonshire ... into it he went with nine attendant bards, taking with him the 'Thirteen Treasures of Britain,' thenceforth lost to men.” Professor Rhys points out that a Greek traveller named Demetrius, who is described as having visited Britain in the first century A.D., mentions an island in the west where “Kronos” was supposed to be imprisoned with his attendant deities, and Briareus keeping watch over him as he slept, “for sleep was the bond forged for him.” Doubtless we have here a version, Hellenised as was the wont of classical writers on barbaric myths, of a British story of the descent of the Sun-god into the western sea, and his imprisonment there by the powers of darkness, with the possessions and magical potencies belonging to Light and Life.<sup>153</sup>

### **Nynniaw and Peibaw**

The two personages called Nynniaw and Peibaw who figure in the genealogical table play a very slight part in Cymric mythology, but one story in which they appear is interesting in itself and has an excellent moral. They are represented<sup>154</sup> as two brothers, Kings of Britain, who were walking together one starlight night. “See what a fine far-spreading field I have,” said Nynniaw. “Where is it?” asked Peibaw. “There aloft and as far as you can see,” said Nynniaw, pointing to the sky. “But look at all my cattle grazing in your field,” said Peibaw. “Where are they?” said Nynniaw. “All the golden stars,” said Peibaw, “with the moon for their shepherd.” “They shall not graze on my field,” cried Nynniaw. “I say they shall,” returned Peibaw. “They shall not.” “They shall.” And so they went on: first they quarrelled with each other, and then went to war, and armies were destroyed and lands laid waste, till at last the two brothers were turned into oxen as a punishment for their stupidity and quarrelsomeness.

### **The “Mabinogion”**



We now come to the work in which the chief treasures of Cymric myth and legend were collected by Lady Charlotte Guest sixty years ago, and given to the world in a translation which is one of the masterpieces of English literature. The title of this work, the “Mabinogion,” is the plural form of the word *Mabinogi*, which means a story belonging to the equipment of an apprentice-bard, such a story as every bard had necessarily to learn as part of his training, whatever more he might afterwards add to his *répertoire*. Strictly speaking, the *Mabinogi* in the volume are only the four tales given first in Mr. Alfred Nutt's edition, which were entitled the “Four Branches of the Mabinogi,” and which form a connected whole. They are among the oldest relics of Welsh mythological saga.

### **Pwyll, Head of Hades**

The first of them is the story of Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed, and relates how that prince got his title of *Pen Annwn*, or “Head of Hades”—Annwn being the term under which we identify in Welsh literature the Celtic Land of the Dead, or Fairyland. It is a story with a mythological basis, but breathing the purest spirit of chivalric honour and nobility.

Pwyll, it is said, was hunting one day in the woods of Glyn Cuch when he saw a pack of hounds, not his own, running down a stag. These hounds were snow-white in colour, with red ears. If Pwyll had had any experience in these matters he would have known at once what kind of hunt was up, for these are the colours of Faëry—the red-haired man, the red-eared hound are always associated with magic.<sup>155</sup> Pwyll, however, drove off the strange hounds, and was setting his own on the quarry when a horseman of noble appearance came up and reproached him for his discourtesy. Pwyll offered to make amends, and the story now develops into the familiar theme of the Rescue of Fairyland. The stranger's name is Arawn, a king in Annwn. He is being harried and dispossessed by a rival, Havgan, and he seeks the aid of Pwyll, whom he begs to meet Havgan in single combat a year hence. Meanwhile he will put his own shape on Pwyll, who is to rule in his kingdom till the eventful day, while Arawn will go in Pwyll's shape to

govern Dyfed. He instructs Pwyll how to deal with the foe. Havgan must be laid low with a single stroke—if another is given to him he immediately revives again as strong as ever.

Pwyll agreed to follow up the adventure, and accordingly went in Arawn's shape to the kingdom of Annwn. Here he was placed in an unforeseen difficulty. The beautiful wife of Arawn greeted him as her husband. But when the time came for them to retire to rest he set his face to the wall and said no word to her, nor touched her at all until the morning broke. Then they rose up, and Pwyll went to the hunt, and ruled his kingdom, and did all things as if he were monarch of the land. And whatever affection he showed to the queen in public during the day, he passed every night even as this first.

At last the day of battle came, and, like the chieftains in Gaelic story, Pwyll and Havgan met each other in the midst of a river-ford. They fought, and at the first clash Havgan was hurled a spear's length over the crupper of his horse and fell mortally wounded.<sup>156</sup> “For the love of heaven,” said he, “slay me and complete thy work.” “I may yet repent that,” said Pwyll. “Slay thee who may, I will not.” Then Havgan knew that his end was come, and bade his nobles bear him off; and Pwyll with all his army overran the two kingdoms of Annwn, and made himself master of all the land, and took homage from its princes and lords.

Then he rode off alone to keep his tryst in Glyn Cuch with Arawn as they had appointed. Arawn thanked him for all he had done, and added: “When thou comest thyself to thine own dominions thou wilt see what I have done for thee.” They exchanged shapes once more, and each rode in his own likeness to take possession of his own land.

At the court of Annwn the day was spent in joy and feasting, though none but Arawn himself knew that anything unusual had taken place. When night came Arawn kissed and caressed his wife as of old, and she pondered much as to what might be the cause of his change towards her, and of his previous change a year and a day before. And as she was thinking over these things Arawn spoke to her twice or thrice, but got no answer. He then asked her why she was silent. “I tell thee,” she said, “that for a year I have

not spoken so much in this place.” “Did not we speak continually?” he said. “Nay,” said she, “but for a year back there has been neither converse nor tenderness between us.” “Good heaven!” thought Arawn, “a man as faithful and firm in his friendship as any have I found for a friend.” Then he told his queen what had passed. “Thou hast indeed laid hold of a faithful friend,” she said.

And Pwyll when he came back to his own land called his lords together and asked them how they thought he had sped in his kingship during the past year. “Lord,” said they, “thy wisdom was never so great, and thou wast never so kind and free in bestowing thy gifts, and thy justice was never more worthily seen than in this year.” Pwyll then told them the story of his adventure. “Verily, lord,” said they, “render thanks unto heaven that thou hast such a fellowship, and withhold not from us the rule which we have enjoyed for this year past.” “I take heaven to witness that I will not withhold it,” said Pwyll.

So the two kings made strong the friendship that was between them, and sent each other rich gifts of horses and hounds and jewels; and in memory of the adventure Pwyll bore thenceforward the title of “Lord of Annwn.”

## **The Wedding of Pwyll and Rhiannon**

Near to the castle of Narberth, where Pwyll had his court, there was a mound called the Mound of Arberth, of which it was believed that whoever sat upon it would have a strange adventure: either he would receive blows and wounds or he would see a wonder. One day when all his lords were assembled at Narberth for a feast Pwyll declared that he would sit on the mound and see what would befall.

He did so, and after a little while saw approaching him along the road that led to the mound a lady clad in garments that shone like gold, and sitting on a pure white horse. “Is there any among you,” said Pwyll to his men, “who knows that lady?” “There is not,” said they. “Then go to meet her and learn who she is.” But as they rode towards the lady she moved away from them, and however fast they rode she still kept an even distance

between her and them, yet never seemed to exceed the quiet pace with which she had first approached.

Several times did Pwyll seek to have the lady overtaken and questioned, but all was in vain—none could draw near to her.

Next day Pwyll ascended the mound again, and once more the fair lady on her white steed drew near. This time Pwyll himself pursued her, but she flitted away before him as she had done before his servants, till at last he cried : “O maiden, for the sake of him thou best lovest, stay for me.” “I will stay gladly,” said she, “and it were better for thy horse had thou asked it long since.”

Pwyll then questioned her as to the cause of her coming, and she said: “I am Rhiannon, the daughter of Hevydd Hēn,<sup>157</sup> and they sought to give me to a husband against my will. But no husband would I have, and that because of my love for thee; neither will I yet have one if thou reject me.” “By heaven!” said Pwyll, “if I might choose among all the ladies and damsels of the world, thee would I choose.”

They then agree that in a twelvemonth from that day Pwyll is to come and claim her at the palace of Hevydd Hēn.

Pwyll kept his tryst, with a following of a hundred knights, and found a splendid feast prepared for him, and he sat by his lady, with her father on the other side. As they feasted and talked there entered a tall, auburn-haired youth of royal bearing, clad in satin, who saluted Pwyll and his knights. Pwyll invited him to sit down. “Nay, I am a suitor to thee,” said the youth; “to crave a boon am I come.” “Whatever thou wilt thou shalt have,” said Pwyll unsuspectingly, “if it be in my power.” “Ah,” cried Rhiannon, “wherefore didst thou give that answer?” “Hath he not given it before all these nobles?” said the youth; “and now the boon I crave is to have thy bride Rhiannon, and the feast and the banquet that are in this place.” Pwyll was silent. “Be silent as long as thou wilt,” said Rhiannon. “Never did man make worse use of his wits than thou hast done.” She tells him that the auburn-haired young man is Gwawl, son of Clud, and is the suitor to escape from whom she had fled to Pwyll.

Pwyll is bound in honour by his word, and Rhiannon explains that the banquet cannot be given to Gwawl, for it is not in Pwyll's power, but that she herself will be his bride in a twelvemonth; Gwawl is to come and claim her then, and a new bridal feast will be prepared for him. Meantime she concert a plan with Pwyll, and gives him a certain magical bag, which he is to make use of when the time shall come.

A year passed away, Gwawl appeared according to the compact, and a great feast was again set forth, in which he, and not Pwyll, had the place of honour. As the company were making merry, however, a beggar clad in rags and shod with clumsy old shoes came into the hall, carrying a bag, as beggars are wont to do. He humbly craved a boon of Gwawl. It was merely that the full of his bag of food might be given him from the banquet. Gwawl cheerfully consented, and an attendant went to fill the bag. But however much they put into it it never got fuller—by degrees all the good things on the tables had gone in; and at last Gwawl cried: “My soul, will thy bag never be full?” “It will not, I declare to heaven,” answered Pwyll—for he, of course, was the disguised beggar man—“unless some man wealthy in lands and treasure shall get into the bag and stamp it down with his feet, and declare, ‘Enough has been put herein.’” Rhiannon urged Gwawl to check the voracity of the bag. He put his two feet into it; Pwyll immediately drew up the sides of the bag over Gwawl's head and tied it up. Then he blew his horn, and the knights he had with him, who were concealed outside, rushed in, and captured and bound the followers of Gwawl. “What is in the bag?” they cried, and others answered, “A badger,” and so they played the game of “Badger in the Bag,” striking it and kicking it about the hall.

At last a voice was heard from it. “Lord,” cried Gwawl, “if thou wouldst but hear me, I merit not to be slain in a bag.” “He speaks truth,” said Hevydd Hēn.

So an agreement was come to that Gwawl should provide means for Pwyll to satisfy all the suitors and minstrels who should come to the wedding, and abandon Rhiannon, and never seek to have revenge for what had been done to him. This was confirmed by sureties, and Gwawl and his men were released and went to their own territory. And Pwyll wedded

Rhiannon, and dispensed gifts royally to all and sundry; and at last the pair, when the feasting was done, journeyed down to the palace of Narberth in Dyfed, where Rhiannon gave rich gifts, a bracelet and a ring or a precious stone to all the lords and ladies of her new country, and they ruled the land in peace both that year and the next. But the reader will find that we have not yet done with Gwawl.

### **The Penance of Rhiannon**

Now Pwyll was still without an heir to the throne, and his nobles urged him to take another wife. “Grant us a year longer,” said he, “and if there be no heir after that it shall be as you wish.” Before the year's end a son was born to them in Narberth. But although six women sat up to watch the mother and the infant, it happened towards the morning that they all fell asleep, and Rhiannon also slept, and when the women awoke, behold, the boy was gone! “We shall be burnt for this,” said the women, and in their terror they concocted a horrible plot: they killed a cub of a staghound that had just been littered, and laid the bones by Rhiannon, and smeared her face and hands with blood as she slept, and when she woke and asked for her child they said she had devoured it in the night, and had overcome them with furious strength when they would have prevented her—and for all she could say or do the six women persisted in this story.

When the story was told to Pwyll he would not put away Rhiannon, as his nobles now again begged him to do, but a penance was imposed on her—namely, that she was to sit every day by the horse-block at the gate of the castle and tell the tale to every stranger who came, and offer to carry them on her back into the castle. And this she did for part of a year.

### **The Finding of Pryderi<sup>158</sup>**

Now at this time there lived a man named Teirnyon of Gwent Is Coed, who had the most beautiful mare in the world, but there was this misfortune attending her, that although she foaled on the night of every first of May,

none ever knew what became of the colts. At last Teirnyon resolved to get at the truth of the matter, and the next night on which the mare should foal he armed himself and watched in the stable. So the mare foaled, and the colt stood up, and Teirnyon was admiring its size and beauty when a great noise was heard outside, and a long, clawed arm came through the window of the stable and laid hold of the colt. Teirnyon immediately smote at the arm with his sword, and severed it at the elbow, so that it fell inside with the colt, and a great wailing and tumult was heard outside. He rushed out, leaving the door open behind him, but could see nothing because of the darkness of the night, and he followed the noise a little way. Then he came back, and behold, at the door he found an infant in swaddling-clothes and wrapped in a mantle of satin. He took up the child and brought it to where his wife lay sleeping. She had no children, and she loved the child when she saw it, and next day pretended to her women that she had borne it as her own. And they called its name Gwri of the Golden Hair, for its hair was yellow as gold; and it grew so mightily that in two years it was as big and strong as a child of six; and ere long the colt that had been foaled on the same night was broken in and given him to ride.

While these things were going on Teirnyon heard the tale of Rhiannon and her punishment. And as the lad grew up he scanned his face closely and saw that he had the features of Pwyll Prince of Dyfed. This he told to his wife, and they agreed that the child should be taken to Narberth, and Rhiannon released from her penance.

As they drew near to the castle, Teirnyon and two knights and the child riding on his colt, there was Rhiannon sitting by the horse-block. "Chieftains," said she, "go not further thus; I will bear every one of you into the palace, and this is my penance for slaying my own son and devouring him." But they would not be carried, and went in. Pwyll rejoiced to see Teirnyon, and made a feast for him. Afterwards Teirnyon declared to Pwyll and Rhiannon the adventure of the man and the colt, and how they had found the boy. "And behold, here is thy son, lady," said Teirnyon, "and whoever told that lie concerning thee has done wrong." All who sat at table recognised the lad at once as the child of Pwyll, and Rhiannon cried: "I

declare to heaven that if this be true there is an end to my trouble.” And a chief named Pendaran said: “Well hast thou named thy son Pryderi (trouble), and well becomes him the name of Pryderi son of Pwyll, Lord of Annwn.” It was agreed that his name should be Pryderi, and so he was called thenceforth.

Teirnyon rode home, overwhelmed with thanks and love and gladness; and Pwyll offered him rich gifts of horses and jewels and dogs, but he would take none of them. And Pryderi was trained up, as befitted a king's son, in all noble ways and accomplishments, and when his father Pwyll died he reigned in his stead over the Seven Cantrevs of Dyfed. And he added to them many other fair dominions, and at last he took to wife Kicva, daughter of Gwynn Gohoyw, who came of the lineage of Prince Casnar of Britain.

### **The Tale of Bran and Branwen**

Bendigeid Vran, or “Bran the Blessed,” by which latter name we shall designate him here, when he had been made King of the Isle of the Mighty (Britain), was one time in his court at Harlech. And he had with him his brother Manawyddan son of Llyr, and his sister Branwen, and the two sons, Nissyen and Evnissyen, that Penardun his mother bore to Eurosswyd. Now Nissyen was a youth of gentle nature, and would make peace among his kindred and cause them to be friends when their wrath was at its highest; but Evnissyen loved nothing so much as to turn peace into contention and strife.

One afternoon, as Bran son of Llyr sat on the rock of Harlech looking out to sea, he beheld thirteen ships coming rapidly from Ireland before a fair wind. They were gaily furnished, bright flags flying from the masts, and on the foremost ship, when they came near, a man could be seen holding up a shield with the point upwards in sign of peace.<sup>159</sup>

When the strangers landed they saluted Bran and explained their business. Matholwch,<sup>160</sup> King of Ireland, was with them; his were the ships, and he had come to ask for the hand in marriage of Bran's sister, Branwen, so that Ireland and Britain might be leagued together and both become more



powerful. “Now Branwen was one of the three chief ladies of the island, and she was the fairest damsel in the world.”

The Irish were hospitably entertained, and after taking counsel with his lords Bran agreed to give his sister to Matholwch. The place of the wedding was fixed at Aberffraw, and the company assembled for the feast in tents because no house could hold the giant form of Bran. They caroused and made merry in peace and amity, and Branwen became the bride of the Irish king.

Next day Evnissyen came by chance to where the horses of Matholwch were ranged, and he asked whose they were. “They are the horses of Matholwch, who is married to thy sister.” “And is it thus,” said he, “they have done with a maiden such as she, and, moreover, my sister, bestowing her without my consent? They could offer me no greater insult.” Thereupon he rushed among the horses and cut off their lips at the teeth, and their ears to their heads, and their tails close to the body, and where he could seize the eyelids he cut them off to the bone.

When Matholwch heard what had been done he was both angered and bewildered, and bade his people put to sea. Bran sent messengers to learn what had happened, and when he had been informed he sent Manawyddan and two others to make atonement. Matholwch should have sound horses for every one that was injured, and in addition a staff of silver as large and as tall as himself, and a plate of gold the size of his face. “And let him come and meet me,” he added, “and we will make peace in any way he may desire.” But as for Evnissyen, he was the son of Bran's mother, and therefore Bran could not put him to death as he deserved.

### **The Magic Cauldron**

Matholwch accepted these terms, but not very cheerfully, and Bran now offered another treasure, namely, a magic cauldron which had the property that if a slain man were cast into it he would come forth well and sound, only he would not be able to speak. Matholwch and Bran then talked about the cauldron, which originally, it seems, came from Ireland. There was a

lake in that country near to a mound (doubtless a fairy mound) which was called the Lake of the Cauldron. Here Matholwch had once met a tall and ill-looking fellow with a wife bigger than himself, and the cauldron strapped on his back. They took service with Matholwch. At the end of a period of six weeks the wife gave birth to a son, who was a warrior fully armed. We are apparently to understand that this happened every six weeks, for by the end of the year the strange pair, who seem to be a war-god and goddess, had several children, whose continual bickering and the outrages they committed throughout the land made them hated. At last, to get rid of them, Matholwch had a house of iron made, and enticed them into it. He then barred the door and heaped coals about the chamber, and blew them into a white heat, hoping to roast the whole family to death. As soon, however, as the iron walls had grown white-hot and soft the man and his wife burst through them and got away, but the children remained behind and were destroyed. Bran then took up the story. The man, who was called Llassar Llaesgyvnewid, and his wife Kymideu Kymeinvoll, come across to Britain, where Bran took them in, and in return for his kindness they gave him the cauldron. And since then they had filled the land with their descendants, who prospered everywhere and dwelt in strong fortified burgs and had the best weapons that ever were seen.

So Matholwch received the cauldron along with his bride, and sailed back to Ireland, where Branwen entertained the lords and ladies of the land, and gave to each, as he or she took leave, "either a clasp or a ring or a royal jewel to keep, such as it was honourable to be seen departing with." And when the year was out Branwen bore a son to Matholwch, whose name was called Gwern.

### **The Punishment of Branwen**

There occurs now an unintelligible place in the story. In the second year, it appears, and not till then, the men of Ireland grew indignant over the insult to their king committed by Evnissyen, and took revenge for it by having Branwen degraded to the position of a cook, and they caused the butcher

every day to give her a blow on the ears. They also forbade all ships and ferry-boats to cross to Cambria, and any who came thence into Ireland were imprisoned so that news of Branwen's ill-treatment might not come to the ears of Bran. But Branwen reared up a young starling in a corner of her kneading-trough, and one day she tied a letter under its wing and taught it what to do. It flew away towards Britain, and finding Bran at Caer Seiont in Arvon, it lit on his shoulder, ruffling its feathers, and the letter was found and read. Bran immediately prepared a great hosting for Ireland, and sailed thither with a fleet of ships, leaving his land of Britain under his son Caradawc and six other chiefs.

### **The Invasion of Bran**

Soon there came messengers to Matholwch telling him of a wondrous sight they had seen; a wood was growing on the sea, and beside the wood a mountain with a high ridge in the middle of it, and two lakes, one at each side. And wood and mountain moved towards the shore of Ireland. Branwen is called up to explain, if she could, what this meant. She tells them the wood is the masts and yards of the fleet of Britain, and the mountain is Bran, her brother, coming into shoal water, “for no ship can contain him”; the ridge is his nose, the lakes his two eyes.<sup>161</sup>

The King of Ireland and his lords at once took counsel together how they might meet this danger; and the plan they agreed upon was as follows: A huge hall should be built, big enough to hold Bran—this, it was hoped, would placate him—there should be a great feast made there for himself and his men, and Matholwch should give over the kingdom of Ireland to him and do homage. All this was done by Branwen's advice. But the Irish added a crafty device of their own. From two brackets on each of the hundred pillars in the hall should be hung two leather bags, with an armed warrior in each of them ready to fall upon the guests when the moment should arrive.

### **The Meal-bags**

Evnisseyen, however, wandered into the hall before the rest of the host, and scanning the arrangements “with fierce and savage looks,” he saw the bags which hung from the pillars. “What is in this bag?” said he to one of the Irish. “Meal, good soul,” said the Irishman. Evnisseyen laid his hand on the bag, and felt about with his fingers till he came to the head of the man within it. Then “he squeezed the head till he felt his fingers meet together in the brain through the bone.” He went to the next bag, and asked the same question. “Meal,” said the Irish attendant, but Evnisseyen crushed this warrior's head also, and thus he did with all the two hundred bags, even in the case of one warrior whose head was covered with an iron helm.

Then the feasting began, and peace and concord reigned, and Matholwch laid down the sovereignty of Ireland, which was conferred on the boy Gwern. And they all fondled and caressed the fair child till he came to Evnisseyen, who suddenly seized him and flung him into the blazing fire on the hearth. Branwen would have leaped after him, but Bran held her back. Then there was arming apace, and tumult and shouting, and the Irish and British hosts closed in battle and fought until the fall of night.

### **Death of Evnisseyen**

But at night the Irish heated the magic cauldron and threw into it the bodies of their dead, who came out next day as good as ever, but dumb. When Evnisseyen saw this he was smitten with remorse for having brought the men of Britain into such a strait: “Evil betide me if I find not a deliverance therefrom.” So he hid himself among the Irish dead, and was flung into the cauldron with the rest at the end of the second day, when he stretched himself out so that he rent the cauldron into four pieces, and his own heart burst with the effort, and he died.

### **The Wonderful Head**

In the end, all the Irishmen were slain, and all but seven of the British besides Bran, who was wounded in the foot with a poisoned arrow. Among

the seven were Pryderi and Manawyddan. Bran then commanded them to cut off his head. "And take it with you," he said, "to London, and there bury it in the White Mount<sup>162</sup> looking towards France, and no foreigner shall invade the land while it is there. On the way the Head will talk to you, and be as pleasant company as ever in life. In Harlech ye will be feasting seven years and the birds of Rhiannon will sing to you. And at Gwales in Penvro ye will be feasting fourscore years, and the Head will talk to you and be uncorrupted till ye open the door looking towards Cornwall. After that ye may no longer tarry, but set forth to London and bury the Head."

Then the seven cut off the head of Bran and went forth, and Branwen with them, to do his bidding. But when Branwen came to land at Aber Alaw she cried, "Woe is me that I was ever born; two islands have been destroyed because of me." And she uttered a loud groan, and her heart broke. They made her a four-sided grave on the banks of the Alaw, and the place was called *Ynys Branwen* to this day.<sup>163</sup>

The seven found that in the absence of Bran, Caswallan son of Beli had conquered Britain and slain the six captains of Caradawc. By magic art he had thrown on Caradawc the Veil of Illusion, and Caradawc saw only the sword which slew and slew, but not him who wielded it, and his heart broke for grief at the sight.

They then went to Harlech and remained there seven years listening to the singing of the birds of Rhiannon—"all the songs they had ever heard were unpleasant compared thereto." Then they went to Gwales in Penvro and found a fair and spacious hall overlooking the ocean. When they entered it they forgot all the sorrow of the past and all that had befallen them, and remained there fourscore years in joy and mirth, the wondrous Head talking to them as if it were alive. And bards call this "the Entertaining of the Noble Head." Three doors were in the hall, and one of them which looked to Cornwall and to Aber Henvelyn was closed, but the other two were open. At the end of the time, Heilyn son of Gwyn said, "Evil betide me if I do not open the door to see if what was said is true." And he opened it, and at once remembrance and sorrow fell upon them, and they set forth at once for London and buried the Head in the White Mount,

where it remained until Arthur dug it up, for he would not have the land defended but by the strong arm. And this was “the Third Fatal Disclosure” in Britain.

So ends this wild tale, which is evidently full of mythological elements, the key to which has long been lost. The touches of Northern ferocity which occur in it have made some critics suspect the influence of Norse or Icelandic literature in giving it its present form. The character of Evnissyen would certainly lend countenance to this conjecture. The typical mischief-maker of course occurs in purely Celtic sagas, but not commonly in combination with the heroic strain shown in Evnissyen's end, nor does the Irish “poison-tongue” ascend to anything like the same height of daimonic malignity.

### **The Tale of Pryderi and Manawyddan**

After the events of the previous tales Pryderi and Manawyddan retired to the dominions of the former, and Manawyddan took to wife Rhiannon, the mother of his friend. There they lived happily and prosperously till one day, while they were at the Gorsedd, or Mound, near Narberth, a peal of thunder was heard and a thick mist fell so that nothing could be seen all round. When the mist cleared away, behold, the land was bare before them—neither houses nor people nor cattle nor crops were to be seen, but all was desert and uninhabited. The palace of Narberth was still standing, but it was empty and desolate—none remained except Pryderi and Manawyddan and their wives, Kicva and Rhiannon.

Two years they lived on the provisions they had, and on the prey they killed, and on wild honey; and then they began to be weary. “Let us go into Lloegyr,”<sup>164</sup> then said Manawyddan, “and seek out some craft to support ourselves.” So they went to Hereford and settled there, and Manawyddan and Pryderi began to make saddles and housings, and Manawyddan decorated them with blue enamel as he had learned from a great craftsman, Llasar Llaesgywydd. After a time, however, the other saddlers of Hereford, finding that no man would purchase any but the work of Manawyddan,

conspired to kill them. And Pryderi would have fought with them, but Manawyddan held it better to withdraw elsewhere, and so they did.

They settled then in another city, where they made shields such as never were seen, and here, too, in the end, the rival craftsmen drove them out. And this happened also in another town where they made shoes; and at last they resolved to go back to Dyfed. Then they gathered their dogs about them and lived by hunting as before.

One day they started a wild white boar, and chased him in vain until he led them up to a vast and lofty castle, all newly built in a place where they had never seen a building before. The boar ran into the castle, the dogs followed him, and Pryderi, against the counsel of Manawyddan, who knew there was magic afoot, went in to seek for the dogs.

He found in the centre of the court a marble fountain beside which stood a golden bowl on a marble slab, and being struck by the rich workmanship of the bowl, he laid hold of it to examine it, when he could neither withdraw his hand nor utter a single sound, but he remained there, transfixed and dumb, beside the fountain.

Manawyddan went back to Narberth and told the story to Rhiannon. "An evil companion hast thou been," said she, "and a good companion hast thou lost."

Next day she went herself to explore the castle. She found Pryderi still clinging to the bowl and unable to speak. She also, then, laid hold of the bowl, when the same fate befell her, and immediately afterwards came a peal of thunder, and a heavy mist fell, and when it cleared off the castle had vanished with all that it contained, including the two spell-bound wanderers.

Manawyddan then went back to Narberth, where only Kicva, Pryderi's wife, now remained. And when she saw none but herself and Manawyddan in the place, "she sorrowed so that she cared not whether she lived or died." When Manawyddan saw this he said to her, "Thou art in the wrong if through fear of me thou grieveest thus. I declare to thee were I in the dawn of youth I would keep my faith unto Pryderi, and unto thee also will I keep it."

“Heaven reward thee,” she said, “and that is what I deemed of thee.” And thereupon she took courage and was glad.

Kicva and Manawyddan then again tried to support themselves by shoemaking in Lloegyr, but the same hostility drove them back to Dyfed. This time, however, Manawyddan took back with him a load of wheat, and he sowed it, and he prepared three crofts for a wheat crop. Thus the time passed till the fields were ripe. And he looked at one of the crofts and said, “I will reap this to-morrow.” But on the morrow when he went out in the grey dawn he found nothing there but bare straw—every ear had been cut off from the stalk and carried away.

Next day it was the same with the second croft. But on the following night he armed himself and sat up to watch the third croft to see who was plundering him. At midnight, as he watched, he heard a loud noise, and behold, a mighty host of mice came pouring into the croft, and they climbed up each on a stalk and nibbled off the ears and made away with them. He chased them in anger, but they fled far faster than he could run, all save one which was slower in its movements, and this he barely managed to overtake, and he bound it into his glove and took it home to Narberth, and told Kicva what had happened. “To-morrow,” he said, “I will hang the robber I have caught,” but Kicva thought it beneath his dignity to take vengeance on a mouse.

Next day he went up to the Mound of Narberth and set up two forks for a gallows on the highest part of the hill. As he was doing this a poor scholar came towards him, and he was the first person Manawyddan had seen in Dyfed, except his own companions, since the enchantment began.

The scholar asked him what he was about and begged him to let go the mouse—“Ill doth it become a man of thy rank to touch such a reptile as this.” “I will not let it go, by Heaven,” said Manawyddan, and by that he abode, although the scholar offered him a pound of money to let it go free. “I care not,” said the scholar, “except that I would not see a man of rank touching such a reptile,” and with that he went his way.

As Manawyddan was placing the cross-beam on the two forks of his gallows, a priest came towards him riding on a horse with trappings, and the



same conversation ensued. The priest offered three pounds for the mouse's life, but Manawyddan refused to take any price for it. "Willingly, lord, do thy good pleasure," said the priest, and he, too, went his way.

Then Manawyddan put a noose about the mouse's neck and was about to draw it up when he saw coming towards him a bishop with a great retinue of sumpter-horses and attendants. And he stayed his work and asked the bishop's blessing. "Heaven's blessing be unto thee," said the bishop; "what work art thou upon?" "Hanging a thief," replied Manawyddan. The bishop offered seven pounds "rather than see a man of thy rank destroying so vile a reptile." Manawyddan refused. Four-and-twenty pounds was then offered, and then as much again, then all the bishop's horses and baggage—all in vain. "Since for this thou wilt not," said the bishop, "do it at whatever price thou wilt." "I will do so," said Manawyddan; "I will that Rhiannon and Pryderi be free." "That thou shalt have," said the (pretended) bishop. Then Manawyddan demands that the enchantment and illusion be taken off for ever from the seven Cantrevs of Dyfed, and finally insists that the bishop shall tell him who the mouse is and why the enchantment was laid on the country. "I am Llwyd son of Kilcoed," replies the enchanter, "and the mouse is my wife; but that she is pregnant thou hadst never overtaken her." He goes on with an explanation which takes us back to the first *Mabinogi* of the Wedding of Rhiannon. The charm was cast on the land to avenge the ill that was done Llwyd's friend, Gwawl son of Clud, with whom Pryderi's father and his knights had played "Badger in the Bag" at the court of Hevydd Hēn. The mice were the lords and ladies of Llwyd's court.

The enchanter is then made to promise that no further vengeance shall be taken on Pryderi, Rhiannon, or Manawyddan, and the two spell-bound captives having been restored, the mouse is released. "Then Llwyd struck her with a magic wand, and she was changed into a young woman, the fairest ever seen." And on looking round Manawyddan saw all the land tilled and peopled as in its best state, and full of herds and dwellings. "What bondage," he asks, "has there been upon Pryderi and Rhiannon?" "Pryderi has had the knockers of the gate of my palace about his neck, and Rhiannon

has had the collars of the asses after they have been carrying hay about her neck.” And such had been their bondage.

### **The Tale of Māth Son of Māthonwy**

The previous tale was one of magic and illusion in which the mythological element is but faint. In that which we have now to consider we are, however, in a distinctly mythological region. The central motive of the tale shows us the Powers of Light contending with those of the Under-world for the prized possessions of the latter, in this case a herd of magic swine. We are introduced in the beginning of the story to the deity, Māth, of whom the bard tells us that he was unable to exist unless his feet lay in the lap of a maiden, except when the land was disturbed by war.<sup>165</sup> Māth is represented as lord of Gwynedd, while Pryderi rules over the one-and-twenty cantrevs of the south. With Māth were his nephews Gwydion and Gilvaethwy sons of Dōn, who went the circuit of the land in his stead, while Māth lay with his feet in the lap of the fairest maiden of the land and time, Goewin daughter of Pebin of Dōl Pebin in Arvon.

### **Gwydion and the Swine of Pryderi**

Gilvaethwy fell sick of love for Goewin, and confided the secret to his brother Gwydion, who undertook to help him to his desire. So he went to Māth one day, and asked his leave to go to Pryderi and beg from him the gift, for Māth, of a herd of swine which had been bestowed on him by Arawn King of Annwn. “They are beasts,” he said, “such as never were known in this island before ... their flesh is better than the flesh of oxen.” Māth bade him go, and he and Gilvaethwy started with ten companions for Dyfed. They came to Pryderi's palace in the guise of bards, and Gwydion, after being entertained at a feast, was asked to tell a tale to the court. After delighting every one with his discourse he begged for a gift of the swine. But Pryderi was under a compact with his people neither to sell nor give them until they had produced double their number in the land. “Thou

mayest exchange them, though,” said Gwydion, and thereupon he made by magic arts an illusion of twelve horses magnificently caparisoned, and twelve hounds, and gave them to Pryderi and made off with the swine as fast as possible, “for,” said he to his companions, “the illusion will not last but from one hour to the same to-morrow.”

The intended result came to pass—Pryderi invaded the land to recover his swine, Māth went to meet him in arms, and Gilvaethwy seized his opportunity and made Goewin his wife, although she was unwilling.

### **Death of Pryderi**

The war was decided by a single combat between Gwydion and Pryderi. “And by force of strength and fierceness, and by the magic and charms of Gwydion, Pryderi was slain. And at Maen Tyriawc, above Melenryd, was he buried, and there is his grave.”

### **The Penance of Gwydion and Gilvaethwy**

When Māth came back he found what Gilvaethwy had done, and he took Goewin to be his queen, but Gwydion and Gilvaethwy went into outlawry, and dwelt on the borders of the land. At last they came and submitted themselves for punishment to Māth. “Ye cannot compensate me my shame, setting aside the death of Pryderi,” he said, “but since ye come hither to be at my will, I shall begin your punishment forthwith.” So he turned them both into deer, and bade them come hither again in a twelvemonth.

They came at the appointed time, bringing with them a young fawn. And the fawn was brought into human shape and baptized, and Gwydion and Gilvaethwy were changed into two wild swine. At the next year's end they came back with a young one who was treated as the fawn before him, and the brothers were made into wolves. Another year passed; they came back again with a young wolf as before, and this time their penance was deemed complete, and their human nature was restored to them, and Māth

gave orders to have them washed and anointed, and nobly clad as was befitting.

### **The Children of Arianrod: Dylan**

The question then arose of appointing another virgin foot-holder, and Gwydion suggests his sister, Arianrod. She attends for the purpose, and Māth asks her if she is a virgin. "I know not, lord, other than that I am," she says. But she failed in a magical test imposed by Māth, and gave birth to two sons. One of these was named Dylan, "Son of the Wave," evidently a Cymric sea-deity. So soon as he was baptized "he plunged into the sea and swam as well as the best fish that was therein.... Beneath him no wave ever broke." A wild sea-poetry hangs about his name in Welsh legend. On his death, which took place, it is said, at the hand of his uncle Govannon, all the waves of Britain and Ireland wept for him. The roar of the incoming tide at the mouth of the river Conway is still called the "death-groan of Dylan."

### **Llew Llaw Gyffes**

The other infant was seized by Gwydion and brought up under his protection. Like other solar heroes, he grew very rapidly; when he was four he was as big as if he were eight, and the comeliest youth that ever was seen. One day Gwydion took him to visit his mother Arianrod. She hated the children who had exposed her false pretensions, and upbraided Gwydion for bringing the boy into her sight. "What is his name?" she asked. "Verily," said Gwydion, "he has not yet a name." "Then I lay this destiny upon him," said Arianrod, "that he shall never have a name till one is given him by me." On this Gwydion went forth in wrath, and remained in his castle of *Caer Dathyl* that night.

Though the fact does not appear in this tale, it must be remembered that Gwydion is, in the older mythology, the father of Arianrod's children.

### **How Llew Got his Name**

He was resolved to have a name for his son. Next day he went to the strand below Caer Arianrod, bringing the boy with him. Here he sat down by the beach, and in his character of a master of magic he made himself look like a shoemaker, and the boy like an apprentice, and he began to make shoes out of sedges and seaweed, to which he gave the semblance of Cordovan leather. Word was brought to Arianrod of the wonderful shoes that were being made by a strange cobbler, and she sent her measure for a pair. Gwydion made them too large. She sent it again, and he made them too small. Then she came herself to be fitted. While this was going on, a wren came and lit on the boat's mast, and the boy, taking up a bow, shot an arrow that transfixed the leg between the sinew and the bone. Arianrod admired the brilliant shot. "Verily," she said, "with a steady hand (*llaw gyffes*) did the lion (*llew*) hit it." "No thanks to thee," cried Gwydion, "now he has got a name. Llew Llaw Gyffes shall he be called henceforward."

We have seen that the name really means the same thing as the Gaelic Lugh Lamfada, Lugh (Light) of the Long Arm; so that we have here an instance of a legend growing up round a misunderstood name inherited from a half-forgotten mythology.

### **How Llew Took Arms**

The shoes went back immediately to sedges and seaweed again, and Arianrod, angry at being tricked, laid a new curse on the boy. "He shall never bear arms till I invest him with them." But Gwydion, going to Caer Arianrod with the boy in the semblance of two bards, makes by magic art the illusion of a foray of armed men round the castle. Arianrod gives them weapons to help in the defence, and thus again finds herself tricked by the superior craft of Gwydion.

### **The Flower-Wife of Llew**

Next she said, "He shall never have a wife of the race that now inhabits this earth." This raised a difficulty beyond the powers of even Gwydion, and he

went to Māth, the supreme master of magic. “Well,” said Māth, “we will seek, I and thou, to form a wife for him out of flowers.” “So they took the blossoms of the oak, and the blossoms of the broom, and the blossoms of the meadow-sweet, and produced from them a maiden, the fairest and most graceful that man ever saw. And they baptized her, and gave her the name of Blodeuwedd, or Flower-face.” They wedded her to Llew, and gave them the cantrev of Dinodig to reign over, and there Llew and his bride dwelt for a season, happy, and beloved by all.

### **Betrayal of Llew**

But Blodeuwedd was not worthy of her beautiful name and origin. One day when Llew was away on a visit with Māth, a lord named Gronw Pebyr came a-hunting by the palace of Llew, and Blodeuwedd loved him from the moment she looked upon him. That night they slept together, and the next, and the next, and then they planned how to be rid of Llew for ever. But Llew, like the Gothic solar hero Siegfried, is invulnerable except under special circumstances, and Blodeuwedd has to learn from him how he may be slain. This she does under pretence of care for his welfare. The problem is a hard one. Llew can only be killed by a spear which has been a year in making, and has only been worked on during the Sacrifice of the Host on Sundays. Furthermore, he cannot be slain within a house or without, on horseback or on foot. The only way, in fact, is that he should stand with one foot on a dead buck and the other in a cauldron, which is to be used for a bath and thatched with a roof—if he is wounded while in this position with a spear made as directed the wound may be fatal, not otherwise. After a year, during which Gronw wrought at the spear, Blodeuwedd begged Llew to show her more fully what she must guard against, and he took up the required position to please her. Gronw, lurking in a wood hard by, hurled the deadly spear, and the head, which was poisoned, sank into Llew's body, but the shaft broke off. Then Llew changed into an eagle, and with a loud scream he soared up into the air and was no more seen, and Gronw took his castle and lands and added them to his own.

These tidings at last reached Gwydion and Māth, and Gwydion set out to find Llew. He came to the house of a vassal of his, from whom he learned that a sow that he had disappeared every day and could not be traced, but it came home duly each night. Gwydion followed the sow, and it went far away to the brook since called Nant y Llew, where it stopped under a tree and began feeding. Gwydion looked to see what it ate, and found that it fed on putrid flesh that dropped from an eagle sitting aloft on the tree, and it seemed to him that the eagle was Llew. Gwydion sang to it, and brought it gradually down the tree till it came to his knee, when he struck it with his magic wand and restored it to the shape of Llew, but worn to skin and bone —“no one ever saw a more piteous sight.”

### **The Healing of Llew**

When Llew was healed, he and Gwydion took vengeance on their foes. Blodeuwedd was changed into an owl and bidden to shun the light of day, and Gronw was slain by a cast of the spear of Llew that passed through a slab of stone to reach him, and the slab with the hole through it made by the spear of Llew remains by the bank of the river Cynvael in Ardudwy to this day. And Llew took possession, for the second time, of his lands, and ruled them prosperously all his days.

The four preceding tales are called the Four Branches of the Mabinogi, and of the collection called the “Mabinogion” they form the most ancient and important part.

### **The Dream of Maxen Wledig**

Following the order of the tales in the “Mabinogion,” as presented in Mr. Nutt's edition, we come next to one which is a pure work of invention, with no mythical or legendary element at all. It recounts how Maxen Wledig, Emperor of Rome, had a vivid dream, in which he was led into a strange country, where he saw a king in an ivory chair carving chessmen with a steel file from a rod of gold. By him, on a golden throne, was the fairest of

maidens he had ever beheld. Waking, he found himself in love with the dream-maiden, and sent messengers far and wide to discover, if they could, the country and people that had appeared to him. They were found in Britain. Thither went Maxen, and wooed and wedded the maiden. In his absence a usurper laid hold of his empire in Rome, but with the aid of his British friends he reconquered his dominions, and many of them settled there with him, while others went home to Britain. The latter took with them foreign wives, but, it is said, cut out their tongues, lest they should corrupt the speech of the Britons. Thus early and thus powerful was the devotion to their tongue of the Cymry, of whom the mythical bard Taliesin prophesied:

“Their God they will praise,  
Their speech they will keep,  
Their land they will lose,  
Except wild Walia.”

### **The Story of Lludd and Llevelys**

This tale is associated with the former one in the section entitled Romantic British History. It tells how Lludd son of Beli, and his brother Llevelys, ruled respectively over Britain and France, and how Lludd sought his brother's aid to stay the three plagues that were harassing the land. These three plagues were, first, the presence of a demoniac group called the Coranians; secondly, a fearful scream that was heard in every home in Britain on every May-eve, and scared the people out of their senses; thirdly, the unaccountable disappearance of all provisions in the king's court every night, so that nothing that was not consumed by the household could be found the next morning. Lludd and Llevelys talked over these matters through a brazen tube, for the Coranians could hear everything that was said if once the winds got hold of it—a property also attributed to Māth, son of Māthonwy. Llevelys destroyed the Coranians by giving to Lludd a quantity of poisonous insects which were to be bruised up and scattered over the



people at an assembly. These insects would slay the Coranians, but the people of Britain would be immune to them. The scream Llevelys explained as proceeding from two dragons, which fought each other once a year. They were to be slain by being intoxicated with mead, which was to be placed in a pit dug in the very centre of Britain, which was found on measurement to be at Oxford. The provisions, said Llevelys, were taken away by a giant wizard, for whom Lludd watched as directed, and overcame him in combat, and made him his faithful vassal thenceforward. Thus Lludd and Llevelys freed the island from its three plagues.

## **Tales of Arthur**

We next come to five Arthurian tales, one of which, the tale of Kilhwch and Olwen, is the only native Arthurian legend which has come down to us in Welsh literature. The rest, as we have seen, are more or less reflections from the Arthurian literature as developed by foreign hands on the Continent.

### **Kilhwch and Olwen**

Kilhwch was son to Kilydd and his wife Goleuddydd, and is said to have been cousin to Arthur. His mother having died, Kilydd took another wife, and she, jealous of her stepson, laid on him a quest which promised to be long and dangerous. "I declare," she said, "that it is thy destiny"—the Gael would have said *geis*—"not to be suited with a wife till thou obtain Olwen daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr."<sup>166</sup> And Kilhwch reddened at the name, and "love of the maiden diffused itself through all his frame." By his father's advice he set out to Arthur's Court to learn how and where he might find and woo her.

A brilliant passage then describes the youth in the flower of his beauty, on a noble steed caparisoned with gold, and accompanied by two brindled white-breasted greyhounds with collars of rubies, setting forth on his journey to King Arthur. "And the blade of grass bent not beneath him, so light was his courser's tread."

## **Kilhwch at Arthur's Court**

After some difficulties with the Porter and with Arthur's seneschal, Kai, who did not wish to admit the lad while the company were sitting at meat, Kilhwch was brought into the presence of the King, and declared his name and his desire. "I seek this boon," he said, "from thee and likewise at the hands of thy warriors," and he then enumerates an immense list full of mythological personages and details—Bedwyr, Gwyn ap Nudd, Kai, Manawyddan,<sup>167</sup> Geraint, and many others, including "Morvran son of Tegid, whom no one struck at in the battle of Camlan by reason of his ugliness; all thought he was a devil," and "Sandde Bryd Angel, whom no one touched with a spear in the battle of Camlan because of his beauty; all thought he was a ministering angel." The list extends to many scores of names and includes many women, as, for instance, "Creiddylad the daughter of Lludd of the Silver Hand—she was the most splendid maiden in the three Islands of the Mighty, and for her Gwythyr the son of Greidawl and Gwyn the son of Nudd fight every first of May till doom," and the two Iseults and Arthur's Queen, Gwenhwyvar. "All these did Kilydd's son Kilhwch adjure to obtain his boon."

Arthur, however, had never heard of Olwen nor of her kindred. He promised to seek for her, but at the end of a year no tidings of her could be found, and Kilhwch declared that he would depart and leave Arthur shamed. Kai and Bedwyr, with the guide Kynddelig, are at last bidden to go forth on the quest.

## **Servitors of Arthur**

These personages are very different from those who are called by the same names in Malory or Tennyson. Kai, it is said, could go nine days under water. He could render himself at will as tall as a forest tree. So hot was his physical constitution that nothing he bore in his hand could get wetted in the heaviest rain. "Very subtle was Kai." As for Bedwyr—the later Sir Bedivere—we are told that none equalled him in swiftness, and that, though

one-armed, he was a match for any three warriors on the field of battle; his lance made a wound equal to those of nine. Besides these three there went also on the quest Gwrhyr, who knew all tongues, and Gwalchmai son of Arthur's sister Gwyar, and Menw, who could make the party invisible by magic spells.

### **Custennin**

The party journeyed till at last they came to a great castle before which was a flock of sheep kept by a shepherd who had by him a mastiff big as a horse. The breath of this shepherd, we are told, could burn up a tree. "He let no occasion pass without doing some hurt or harm." However, he received the party well, told them that he was Custennin, brother of Yspaddaden whose castle stood before them, and brought them home to his wife. The wife turned out to be a sister of Kilhwch's mother Goleuddydd, and she was rejoiced at seeing her nephew, but sorrowful at the thought that he had come in search of Olwen, "for none ever returned from that quest alive." Custennin and his family, it appears, have suffered much at the hands of Yspaddaden—all their sons but one being slain, because Yspaddaden envied his brother his share of their patrimony. So they associated themselves with the heroes in their quest.

### **Olwen of the White Track**

Next day Olwen came down to the herdsman's house as usual, for she was wont to wash her hair there every Saturday, and each time she did so she left all her rings in the vessel and never sent for them again. She is described in one of those pictorial passages in which the Celtic passion for beauty has found such exquisite utterance.

"The maiden was clothed in a robe of flame-coloured silk, and about her neck was a collar of ruddy gold on which were precious emeralds and rubies. More yellow was her head than the flower of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands and

her fingers than the blossoms of the wood-anemone amidst the spray of the meadow fountain. The eye of the trained hawk, the glance of the three-mewed falcon, was not brighter than hers. Her bosom was more snowy than the breast of the white swan, her cheek was redder than the reddest roses. Whoso beheld her was filled with her love. Four white trefoils sprang up wherever she trod. And therefore was she called Olwen.”<sup>168</sup>

Kilhwch and she conversed together and loved each other, and she bade him go and ask her of her father and deny him nothing that he might demand. She had pledged her faith not to wed without his will, for his life would only last till the time of her espousals.

### **Yspaddaden**

Next day the party went to the castle and saw Yspaddaden. He put them off with various excuses, and as they left flung after them a poisoned dart. Bedwyr caught it and flung it back, wounding him in the knee, and Yspaddaden cursed him in language of extraordinary vigour; the words seem to crackle and spit like flame. Thrice over this happened, and at last Yspaddaden declared what must be done to win Olwen.

### **The Tasks of Kilhwch**

A long series of tasks follows. A vast hill is to be ploughed, sown, and reaped in one day; only Amathaon son of Dōn can do it, and he will not. Govannon, the smith, is to rid the ploughshare at each headland, and he will not do it. The two dun oxen of Gwlwlyd are to draw the plough, and he will not lend them. Honey nine times sweeter than that of the bee must be got to make bragget for the wedding feast. A magic cauldron, a magic basket out of which comes any meat that a man desires, a magic horn, the sword of Gwrnach the Giant—all these must be won; and many other secret and difficult things, some forty in all, before Kilhwch can call Olwen his own. The most difficult quest is that of obtaining the comb and scissors that are between the two ears of Twrch Trwyth, a king transformed into a monstrous

boar. To hunt the boar a number of other quests must be accomplished—the whelp of Greid son of Eri is to be won, and a certain leash to hold him, and a certain collar for the leash, and a chain for the collar, and Mabon son of Modron for the huntsman and the horse of Gweddw to carry Mabon, and Gwyn son of Nudd to help, “whom God placed over the brood of devils in Annwn ... he will never be spared them,” and so forth to an extent which makes the famous *eric* of the sons of Turenn seem trifling by comparison. “Difficulties shalt thou meet with, and nights without sleep, in seeking this (bride price), and if thou obtain it not, neither shalt thou have my daughter.” Kilhwch has one answer for every demand: “It will be easy for me to accomplish this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy. And I shall gain thy daughter and thou shalt lose thy life.”

So they depart on their way to fulfil the tasks, and on their way home they fall in with Gwrnach the Giant, whose sword Kai, pretending to be a sword-polisher, obtains by a stratagem. On reaching Arthur's Court again, and telling the King what they have to do, he promises his aid. First of the marvels they accomplished was the discovery and liberation of Mabon son of Modron, “who was taken from his mother when three nights old, and it is not known where he is now, nor whether he is living or dead.” Gwrhryr inquires of him from the Ousel of Cilgwri, who is so old that a smith's anvil on which he was wont to peck has been worn to the size of a nut, yet he has never heard of Mabon. But he takes them to a beast older still, the Stag of Redynvre, and so on to the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd, and the Eagle of Gwern Abwy, and the Salmon of Llyn Llyw, the oldest of living things, and at last they find Mabon imprisoned in the stone dungeon of Gloucester, and with Arthur's help they release him, and so the second task is fulfilled. In one way or another, by stratagem, or valour, or magic art, every achievement is accomplished, including the last and most perilous one, that of obtaining “the blood of the black witch Orddu, daughter of the white witch Orwen, of Penn Nart Govid on the confines of Hell.” The combat here is very like that of Finn in the cave of Keshcorran, but Arthur at last cleaves the hag in twain, and Kaw of North Britain takes her blood.

So then they set forth for the castle of Yspaddaden again, and he acknowledges defeat. Goreu son of Custennin cuts off his head, and that night Olwen became the happy bride of Kilhwch, and the hosts of Arthur dispersed, every man to his own land.

### **The Dream of Rhonabwy**

Rhonabwy was a man-at-arms under Madawc son of Maredudd, whose brother Iorwerth rose in rebellion against him; and Rhonabwy went with the troops of Madawc to put him down. Going with a few companions into a mean hut to rest for the night, he lies down to sleep on a yellow calf-skin by the fire, while his friends lie on filthy couches of straw and twigs. On the calf-skin he has a wonderful dream. He sees before him the court and camp of Arthur—here the *quasi*-historical king, neither the legendary deity of the former tale nor the Arthur of the French chivalrous romances—as he moves towards Mount Badon for his great battle with the heathen. A character named Iddawc is his guide to the King, who smiles at Rhonabwy and his friends, and asks: “Where, Iddawc, didst thou find these little men?” “I found them, lord, up yonder on the road.” “It pitieth me,” said Arthur, “that men of such stature as these should have the island in their keeping, after the men that guarded it of yore.” Rhonabwy has his attention directed to a stone in the King's ring. “It is one of the properties of that stone to enable thee to remember that which thou seest here to-night, and hadst thou not seen the stone, thou wouldst never have been able to remember aught thereof.”

The different heroes and companions that compose Arthur's army are minutely described, with all the brilliant colour and delicate detail so beloved by the Celtic fabulist. The chief incident narrated is a game of chess that takes place between Arthur and the knight Owain son of Urien. While the game goes on, first the knights of Arthur harry and disturb the Ravens of Owain, but Arthur, when Owain complains, only says: “Play thy game.” Afterwards the Ravens have the better of it, and it is Owain's turn to bid Arthur attend to his game. Then Arthur took the golden chessmen and

crushed them to dust in his hand, and besought Owain to quiet his Ravens, which was done, and peace reigned again. Rhonabwy, it is said, slept three days and nights on the calf-skin before awaking from his wondrous dream. An epilogue declares that no bard is expected to know this tale by heart and without a book, “because of the various colours that were upon the horses, and the many wondrous colours of the arms and of the panoply, and of the precious scarfs, and of the virtue-bearing stones.” The “Dream of Rhonabwy” is rather a gorgeous vision of the past than a story in the ordinary sense of the word.

### **The Lady of the Fountain**

We have here a Welsh reproduction of the *Conte* entitled “Le Chevalier au lion” of Chrestien de Troyes. The principal personage in the tale is Owain son of Urien, who appears in a character as foreign to the spirit of Celtic legend as it was familiar on the Continent, that of knight-errant.

### **The Adventure of Kymon**

We are told in the introduction that Kymon, a knight of Arthur's Court, had a strange and unfortunate adventure. Riding forth in search of some deed of chivalry to do, he came to a splendid castle, where he was hospitably received by four-and-twenty damsels, of whom “the least lovely was more lovely than Gwenhwyvar, the wife of Arthur, when she has appeared loveliest at the Offering on the Day of the Nativity, or at the feast of Easter.” With them was a noble lord, who, after Kymon had eaten, asked of his business. Kymon explained that he was seeking for his match in combat. The lord of the castle smiled, and bade him proceed as follows: He should take the road up the valley and through a forest till he came to a glade with a mound in the midst of it. On the mound he would see a black man of huge stature with one foot and one eye, bearing a mighty iron club. He was wood-ward of that forest, and would have thousands of wild animals, stags,

serpents, and what not, feeding around him. He would show Kymon what he was in quest of.

Kymon followed the instructions, and the black man directed him to where he should find a fountain under a great tree; by the side of it would be a silver bowl on a slab of marble. Kymon was to take the bowl and throw a bowlful of water on the slab, when a terrific storm of hail and thunder would follow—then there would break forth an enchanting music of singing birds—then would appear a knight in black armour riding on a coal-black horse, with a black pennon upon his lance. “And if thou dost not find trouble in that adventure, thou needst not seek it during the rest of thy life.”

### **The Character of Welsh Romance**

Here let us pause for a moment to point out how clearly we are in the region of mediæval romance, and how far from that of Celtic mythology. Perhaps the Celtic “Land of Youth” may have remotely suggested those regions of beauty and mystery into which the Arthurian knight rides in quest of adventure. But the scenery, the motives, the incidents, are altogether different. And how beautiful they are—how steeped in the magic light of romance! The colours live and glow, the forest murmurs in our ears, the breath of that springtime of our modern world is about us, as we follow the lonely rider down the grassy track into an unknown world of peril and delight. While in some respects the Continental tales are greater than the Welsh, more thoughtful, more profound, they do not approach them in the exquisite artistry with which the exterior aspect of things is rendered, the atmosphere of enchantment maintained, and the reader led, with ever-quickenning interest, from point to point in the development of the tale. Nor are these Welsh tales a whit behind in the noble and chivalrous spirit which breathes through them. A finer school of character and of manners could hardly be found in literature. How strange that for many centuries this treasure beyond all price should have lain unnoticed in our midst! And how deep must be our gratitude to the nameless bards whose thought created it,



and to the nobly inspired hand which first made it a possession for all the English-speaking world!

### **Defeat of Kymon**

But to resume our story. Kymon did as he was bidden, the Black Knight appeared, silently they set lance in rest and charged. Kymon was flung to earth, while his enemy, not bestowing one glance upon him, passed the shaft of his lance through the rein of Kymon's horse and rode off with it in the direction whence he had come. Kymon went back afoot to the castle, where none asked him how he had sped, but they gave him a new horse, "a dark bay palfrey with nostrils as red as scarlet," on which he rode home to Caerleon.

### **Owain and the Black Knight**

Owain was, of course, fired by the tale of Kymon, and next morning at the dawn of day he rode forth to seek for the same adventure. All passed as it had done in Kymon's case, but Owain wounded the Black Knight so sorely that he turned his horse and fled, Owain pursuing him hotly. They came to a "vast and resplendent castle." Across the drawbridge they rode, the outer portcullis of which fell as the Black Knight passed it. But so close at his heels was Owain that the portcullis fell behind him, cutting his horse in two behind the saddle, and he himself remained imprisoned between the outer gate of the drawbridge and the inner. While he was in this predicament a maiden came to him and gave him a ring. When he wore it with the stone reversed and clenched in his hand he would become invisible, and when the servants of the lord of the castle came for him he was to elude them and follow her.

This she did knowing apparently who he was, "for as a friend thou art the most sincere, and as a lover the most devoted."

Owain did as he was bidden, and the maiden concealed him. In that night a great lamentation was heard in the castle—its lord had died of the

wound which Owain had given him. Soon afterwards Owain got sight of the mistress of the castle, and love of her took entire possession of him. Luned, the maiden who had rescued him, wooed her for him, and he became her husband, and lord of the Castle of the Fountain and all the dominions of the Black Knight. And he then defended the fountain with lance and sword as his forerunner had done, and made his defeated antagonists ransom themselves for great sums, which he bestowed among his barons and knights. Thus he abode for three years.

### **The Search for Owain**

After this time Arthur, with his nephew Gwalchmai and with Kymon for guide, rode forth at the head of a host to search for tidings of Owain. They came to the fountain, and here they met Owain, neither knowing the other as their helms were down. And first Kai was overthrown, and then Gwalchmai and Owain fought, and after a while Gwalchmai was unhelmed. Owain said, "My lord Gwalchmai, I did not know thee; take my sword and my arms." Said Gwalchmai, "Thou, Owain, art the victor; take thou my sword." Arthur ended the contention in courtesy by taking the swords of both, and then they all rode to the Castle of the Fountain, where Owain entertained them with great joy. And he went back with Arthur to Caerleon, promising to his countess that he would remain there but three months and then return.

### **Owain Forgets his Lady**

But at the Court of Arthur he forgot his love and his duty, and remained there three years. At the end of that time a noble lady came riding upon a horse caparisoned with gold, and she sought out Owain and took the ring from his hand. "Thus," she said, "shall be treated the deceiver, the traitor, the faithless, the disgraced, and the beardless." Then she turned her horse's head and departed. And Owain, overwhelmed with shame and remorse, fled

from the sight of men and lived in a desolate country with wild beasts till his body wasted and his hair grew long and his clothing rotted away.

### **Owain and the Lion**

In this guise, when near to death from exposure and want, he was taken in by a certain widowed countess and her maidens, and restored to strength by magic balsams; and although they besought him to remain with them, he rode forth again, seeking for lonely and desert lands. Here he found a lion in battle with a great serpent. Owain slew the serpent, and the lion followed him and played about him as if it had been a greyhound that he had reared. And it fed him by catching deer, part of which Owain cooked for himself, giving the rest to his lion to devour; and the beast kept watch over him by night.

### **Release of Luned**

Owain next finds an imprisoned damsel, whose sighs he hears, though he cannot see her nor she him. Being questioned, she told him that her name was Luned—she was the handmaid of a countess whose husband had left her, “and he was the friend I loved best in the world.” Two of the pages of the countess had traduced him, and because she defended him she was condemned to be burned if before a year was out he (namely, Owain son of Urien) had not appeared to deliver her. And the year would end to-morrow. On the next day Owain met the two youths leading Luned to execution and did battle with them. With the help of the lion he overcame them, rescued Luned, and returned to the Castle of the Fountain, where he was reconciled with his love. And he took her with him to Arthur's Court, and she was his wife there as long as she lived. Lastly comes an adventure in which, still aided by the lion, he vanquishes a black giant and releases four-and-twenty noble ladies, and the giant vows to give up his evil ways and keep a hospice for wayfarers as long as he should live.

“And thenceforth Owain dwelt at Arthur's Court, greatly beloved, as the head of his household, until he went away with his followers; and these were the army of three hundred ravens which Kenverchyn<sup>169</sup> had left him. And wherever Owain went with these he was victorious. And this is the tale of the Lady of the Fountain.”

## **The Tale of Enid and Geraint**

In this tale, which appears to be based on the “Erec” of Chrestien de Troyes, the main interest is neither mythological nor adventurous, but sentimental. How Geraint found and wooed his love as the daughter of a great lord fallen on evil days; how he jousted for her with Edeyrn, son of Nudd—a Cymric deity transformed into the “Knight of the Sparrowhawk”; how, lapped in love of her, he grew careless of his fame and his duty; how he misunderstood the words she murmured over him as she deemed him sleeping, and doubted her faith; how despitefully he treated her; and in how many a bitter test she proved her love and loyalty—all these things have been made so familiar to English readers in Tennyson's “Enid” that they need not detain us here. Tennyson, in this instance, has followed his original very closely.

### **Legends of the Grail: The Tale of Peredur**

The Tale of Peredur is one of great interest and significance in connexion with the origin of the Grail legend. Peredur corresponds to the Perceval of Chrestien de Troyes, to whom we owe the earliest extant poem on the Grail; but that writer left his Grail story unfinished, and we never learn from him what exactly the Grail was or what gave it its importance. When we turn for light to “Peredur,” which undoubtedly represents a more ancient form of the legend, we find ourselves baffled. For “Peredur” may be described as the Grail story without the Grail.<sup>170</sup> The strange personages, objects, and incidents which form the usual setting for the entry upon the scene of this mystic treasure are all here; we breathe the very atmosphere of the Grail Castle; but of the Grail itself there is no word. The story is concerned simply with the vengeance taken by the hero for the slaying of a

kinsman, and for this end only are the mysteries of the Castle of Wonders displayed to him.

We learn at the opening of the tale that Peredur was in the significant position of being a seventh son. To be a seventh son was, in this world of mystical romance, equivalent to being marked out by destiny for fortunes high and strange. His father, Evrawc, an earl of the North, and his six brothers had fallen in fight. Peredur's mother, therefore, fearing a similar fate for her youngest child, brought him up in a forest, keeping from him all knowledge of chivalry or warfare and of such things as war-horses or weapons. Here he grew up a simple rustic in manner and in knowledge, but of an amazing bodily strength and activity.

### **He Goes Forth in Quest of Adventure**

One day he saw three knights on the borders of the forest. They were all of Arthur's Court—Gwalchmai, Geneir, and Owain. Entranced by the sight, he asked his mother what these beings were. "They are angels, my son," said she. "By my faith," said Peredur, "I will go and become an angel with them." He goes to meet them, and soon learns what they are. Owain courteously explains to him the use of a saddle, a shield, a sword, all the accoutrements of warfare; and Peredur that evening picked out a bony piebald draught-horse, and dressed him up in a saddle and trappings made of twigs, and imitated from those he had seen. Seeing that he was bent on going forth to deeds of chivalry, his mother gave him her blessing and sundry instructions, and bade him seek the Court of Arthur; "there there are the best, and the boldest, and the most beautiful of men."

### **His First Feat of Arms**

Peredur mounted his Rosinante, took for weapons a handful of sharp-pointed stakes, and rode forth to Arthur's Court. Here the steward, Kai, rudely repulsed him for his rustic appearance, but a dwarf and dwarfess, who had been a year at the Court without speaking one word to any one

there, cried: “Goodly Peredur, son of Evrawc; the welcome of Heaven be unto thee, flower of knights and light of chivalry.” Kai chastised the dwarfs for breaking silence by lauding such a fellow as Peredur, and when the latter demanded to be brought to Arthur, bade him first go and overcome a stranger knight who had just challenged the whole Court by throwing a goblet of wine into the face of Gwenhwyvar, and whom all shrank from meeting. Peredur went out promptly to where the ruffian knight was swaggering up and down, awaiting an opponent, and in the combat that ensued pierced his skull with one of his sharp stakes and slew him. Owain then came out and found Peredur dragging his fallen enemy about. “What art thou doing there?” said Owain. “This iron coat,” said Peredur, “will never come off from him; not by my efforts at any rate.” So Owain showed him how to unfasten the armour, and Peredur took it, and the knight's weapons and horse, and rode forth to seek what further adventures might befall.

Here we have the character of *der reine Thor*, the valiant and pure-hearted simpleton, clearly and vividly drawn.

Peredur on leaving Arthur's Court had many encounters in which he triumphed with ease, sending the beaten knights to Caerleon-on-Usk with the message that he had overthrown them for the honour of Arthur and in his service, but that he, Peredur, would never come to the Court again till he had avenged the insult to the dwarfs upon Kai, who was accordingly reproved by Arthur and was greatly grieved thereat.

## **The Castle of Wonders**

We now come into what the reader will immediately recognise as the atmosphere of the Grail legend. Peredur came to a castle beside a lake, where he found a venerable man with attendants about him who were fishing in the lake. As Peredur approached, the aged man rose and went into the castle, and Peredur saw that he was lame. Peredur entered, and was hospitably received in a great hall. The aged man asked him, when they had done their meal, if he knew how to fight with the sword, and promised to

teach him all knightly accomplishments, and “the manners and customs of different countries, and courtesy and gentleness and noble bearing.” And he added: “I am thy uncle, thy mother's brother.” Finally, he bade him ride forth, and remember, whatever he saw that might cause him wonder, not to ask the meaning of it if no one had the courtesy to inform him. This is the test of obedience and self-restraint on which the rest of the adventure turns.

On next riding forth, Peredur came to a vast desert wood, beyond which he found a great castle, the Castle of Wonders. He entered it by the open door, and found a stately, hoary-headed man sitting in a great hall with many pages about him, who received Peredur honourably. At meat Peredur sat beside the lord of the castle, who asked him, when they had done, if he could fight with a sword. “Were I to receive instruction,” said Peredur, “I think I could.” The lord then gave Peredur a sword, and bade him strike at a great iron staple that was in the floor. Peredur did so, and cut the staple in two, but the sword also flew into two parts. “Place the two parts together,” said the lord. Peredur did so, and they became one again, both sword and staple. A second time this was done with the same result. The third time neither sword nor staple would reunite.

“Thou hast arrived,” said the lord, “at two-thirds of thy strength.” He then declared that he also was

Peredur's uncle, and brother to the fisher-lord with whom Peredur had lodged on the previous night. As they discoursed, two youths entered the hall bearing a spear of mighty size, from the point of which three streams of blood dropped upon the ground, and all the company when they saw this began wailing and lamenting with a great outcry, but the lord took no notice and did not break off his discourse with Peredur. Next there came in two maidens carrying between them a large salver, on which, amid a profusion of blood, lay a man's head. Thereupon the wailing and lamenting began even more loudly than before. But at last they fell silent, and Peredur was led off to his chamber. Mindful of the injunction of the fisher-lord, he had shown no surprise at what he saw, nor had he asked the meaning of it. He then rode forth again in quest of other adventures, which he had in bewildering abundance, and which have no particular relation to the main

theme. The mystery of the castle is not revealed till the last pages of the story. The head in the silver dish was that of a cousin of Peredur's. The lance was the weapon with which he was slain, and with which also the uncle of Peredur, the fisher-lord, had been lamed. Peredur had been shown these things to incite him to avenge the wrong, and to prove his fitness for the task. The “nine sorceresses of Gloucester” are said to have been those who worked these evils on the relatives of Peredur. On learning these matters Peredur, with the help of Arthur, attacked the sorceresses, who were slain every one, and the vengeance was accomplished.

### **The Conte del Graal**

The tale of Chrestien de Troyes called the “Conte del Graal” or “Perceval le Gallois” launched the story in European literature. It was written about the year 1180. It agrees in the introductory portion with “Peredur,” the hero being here called Perceval. He is trained in knightly accomplishments by an aged knight named Gonemans, who warns him against talking overmuch and asking questions. When he comes to the Castle of Wonders the objects brought into the hall are a blood-dripping lance, a “graal” accompanied by two double-branched candlesticks, the light of which is put out by the shining of the graal, a silver plate and sword, the last of which is given to Perceval. The bleeding head of the Welsh story does not appear, nor are we told what the graal was. Next day when Perceval rode forth he met a maiden who upbraided him fiercely for not having asked the meaning of what he saw—had he done so the lame king (who is here identical with the lord of the Castle of Wonders) would have been made whole again. Perceval's sin in quitting his mother against her wish was the reason why he was withholden from asking the question which would have broken the spell. This is a very crude piece of invention, for it was manifestly Peredur's destiny to take arms and achieve the adventure of the Grail, and he committed no sin in doing so. Later on in the story Perceval is met by a damsel of hideous appearance, who curses him for his omission to ask concerning the lance and the other wonders—had he done so the king



would have been restored and would have ruled his land in peace, but now maidens will be put to shame, knights will be slain, widows and orphans will be made.

This conception of the question episode seems to me radically different from that which was adopted in the Welsh version. It is characteristic of Peredur that he always does as he is told by proper authority. The question was a test of obedience and self-restraint, and he succeeded in the ordeal. In fairy literature one is often punished for curiosity, but never for discretion and reserve. The Welsh tale here preserves, I think, the original form of the story. But the French writers mistook the omission to ask questions for a failure on the part of the hero, and invented a shallow and incongruous theory of the episode and its consequences. Strange to say, however, the French view found its way into later versions of the Welsh tale, and such a version is that which we have in the "Mabinogion." Peredur, towards the end of the story, meets with a hideous damsel, the terrors of whose aspect are vividly described, and who rebukes him violently for not having asked the meaning of the marvels at the castle: "Hadst thou done so the king would have been restored to health, and his dominions to peace. Whereas from henceforth he will have to endure battles and conflicts, and his knights will perish, and wives will be widowed, and maidens will be left portionless, and all this is because of thee." I regard this loathly damsel as an obvious interpolation in the Welsh tale. She came into it straight out of the pages of Chrestien. That she did not originally belong to the story of Peredur seems evident from the fact that in this tale the lame lord who bids Peredur refrain from asking questions is, according to the damsel, the very person who would have benefited by his doing so. As a matter of fact, Peredur never does ask the question, and it plays no part in the conclusion of the story.

Chrestien's unfinished tale tells us some further adventures of Perceval and of his friend and fellow-knight, Gauvain, but never explains the significance of the mysterious objects seen at the castle. His continuators, of whom Gautier was the first, tell us that the Graal was the Cup of the Last Supper and the lance that which had pierced the side of Christ at the

Crucifixion; and that Peredur ultimately makes his way back to the castle, asks the necessary question, and succeeds his uncle as lord of the castle and guardian of its treasures.

### **Wolfram von Eschenbach**

In the story as given by Wolfram von Eschenbach, who wrote about the year 1200—some twenty years later than Chrestien de Troyes, with whose work he was acquainted—we meet with a new and unique conception of the Grail. He says of the knights of the Grail Castle:

“Si lebent von einem steine  
Des geslähte ist vîl reine . . .  
Es heizet *lapsit (lapis) exillîs*,  
Der stein ist ouch genannt der Grâl.”<sup>171</sup>

It was originally brought down from heaven by a flight of angels and deposited in Anjou, as the worthiest region for its reception. Its power is sustained by a dove which every Good Friday comes from heaven and lays on the Grail a consecrated Host. It is preserved in the Castle of Munsalväsche (Montsalvat) and guarded by four hundred knights, who are all, except their king, vowed to virginity. The king may marry, and is indeed, in order to maintain the succession, commanded to do so by the Grail, which conveys its messages to mankind by writing which appears upon it and which fades away when deciphered. In the time of Parzival the king is Anfortas. He cannot die in presence of the Grail, but he suffers from a wound which, because he received it in the cause of worldly pride and in seeking after illicit love, the influence of the Grail cannot heal until the destined deliverer shall break the spell. This Parzival should have done by asking the question, “What aileth thee, uncle?” The French version makes Perceval fail in curiosity—Wolfram conceives the failure as one in sympathy. He fails, at any rate, and next morning finds the castle empty and his horse standing ready for him at the gate; as he departs he is mocked by

servitors who appear at the windows of the towers. After many adventures, which are quite unlike those either in Chrestien's "Conte del Graal" or in "Peredur," Parzival, who has wedded the maiden Condwiramur, finds his way back to the Grail Castle—which no one can reach except those destined and chosen to do so by the Grail itself—breaks the spell, and rules over the Grail dominions, his son Loherangrain becoming the Knight of the Swan, who goes abroad righting wrongs, and who, like all the Grail knights, is forbidden to reveal his name and origin to the outside world. Wolfram tells us that he had the substance of the tale from the Provençal poet Kyot or Guiot—"Kyot, der meister wol bekannt"—who in his turn—but this probably is a mere piece of romantic invention—professed to have found it in an Arabic book in Toledo, written by a heathen named Flegetanis.

### **The Continuator of Chrestien**

What exactly may have been the material before Chrestien de Troyes we cannot tell, but his various co-workers and continuators, notably Manessier, all dwell on the Christian character of the objects shown to Perceval in the castle, and the question arises, How did they come to acquire this character? The Welsh story, certainly the most archaic form of the legend, shows that they did not have it from the beginning. An indication in one of the French continuations to Chrestien's "Conte" may serve to put us on the track. Gautier, the author of this continuation, tells us of an attempt on the part of Gauvain (Sir Gawain) to achieve the adventure of the Grail. He partially succeeds, and this half-success has the effect of restoring the lands about the castle, which were desert and untilled, to blooming fertility. The Grail therefore, besides its other characters, had a talismanic power in promoting increase, wealth, and rejuvenation.

### **The Grail a Talisman of Abundance**

The character of a cornucopia, a symbol and agent of abundance and vitality, clings closely to the Grail in all versions of the legend. Even in the

loftiest and most spiritual of these, the “Parzival” of Wolfram von Eschenbach, this quality is very strongly marked. A sick or wounded man who looked on it could not die within the week, nor could its servitors grow old: “though one looked on it for two hundred years, his hair would never turn grey.” The Grail knights lived from it, apparently by its turning into all manner of food and drink the bread which was presented to it by pages. Each man had of it food according to his pleasure, *à son gré*—from this word *gré*, *gréable*, the name Gral, which originated in the French versions, was supposed to be derived.<sup>172</sup> It was the satisfaction of all desires. In Wolfram's poem the Grail, though connected with the Eucharist, was, as we have seen, a stone, not a cup. It thus appears as a relic of ancient stone-worship. It is remarkable that a similar Stone of Abundance occurs also in the Welsh “Peredur,” though not as one of the mysteries of the castle. It was guarded by a black serpent, which Peredur slew, and he gave the stone to his friend Etlyn.

### **The Celtic Cauldron of Abundance**

Now the reader has by this time become well acquainted with an object having the character of a talisman of abundance and rejuvenation in Celtic myth. As the Cauldron of the Dagda it came into Ireland with the Danaans from their mysterious fairy-land. In Welsh legend Bran the Blessed got it from Ireland, whither it returned again as part of Branwen's dowry. In a strange and mystic poem by Taliesin it is represented as part of the spoils of Hades, or Annwn, brought thence by Arthur, in a tragic adventure not otherwise recorded. It is described by Taliesin as lodged in *Caer Pedryvan*, the Four-square Castle of *Pwyll*; the fire that heated it was fanned by the breath of nine maidens, its edge was rimmed with pearls, and it would not cook the food of a coward or man forsworn:<sup>173</sup>

“Am I not a candidate for fame, to be heard in song  
In *Caer Pedryvan*, four times revolving?  
The first word from the cauldron, when was it spoken?

By the breath of nine maidens it was gently warmed.  
Is it not the cauldron of the chief of Annwn? What is its  
fashion?  
A rim of pearls is round its edge.  
It will not cook the food of a coward or one forsworn.  
A sword flashing bright will be raised to him,  
And left in the hand of Lleminawg.

And before the door of the gate of Uffern<sup>174</sup> the lamp was  
burning.  
When we went with Arthur—a splendid labour—  
Except seven, none returned from Caer Vedwyd.<sup>175</sup>

More remotely still the cauldron represents the Sun, which appears in the earliest Aryo-Indian myths as a golden vessel which pours forth light and heat and fertility. The lance is the lightning-weapon of the Thunder God, Indra, appearing in Norse mythology as the hammer of Thor. The quest for these objects represents the ideas of the restoration by some divine champion of the wholesome order of the seasons, disturbed by some temporary derangement such as those which to this day bring famine and desolation to India.

Now in the Welsh “Peredur” we have clearly an outline of the original Celtic tale, but the Grail does not appear in it. We may conjecture, however, from Gautier's continuation of Chrestien's poem that a talisman of abundance figured in early Continental, probably Breton, versions of the legend. In one version at least—that on which Wolfram based his “Parzival”—this talisman was a stone. But usually it would have been, not a stone, but a cauldron or vessel of some kind endowed with the usual attributes of the magic cauldron of Celtic myth. This vessel was associated with a blood-dripping lance. Here were the suggestive elements from which some unknown singer, in a flash of inspiration, transformed the ancient tale of vengeance and redemption into the mystical romance which at once took possession of the heart and soul of Christendom. The magic cauldron

became the cup of the Eucharist, the lance was invested with a more tremendous guilt than that of the death of Peredur's kinsman.<sup>176</sup> Celtic poetry, German mysticism, Christian chivalry, and ideas of magic which still cling to the rude stone monuments of Western Europe—all these combined to make the story of the Grail, and to endow it with the strange attraction which has led to its re-creation by artist after artist for seven hundred years. And who, even now, can say that its course is run at last, and the towers of Montsalvat dissolved into the mist from which they sprang?

### **The Tale of Taliesin**

Alone of the tales in the collection called by Lady Charlotte Guest the “Mabinogion,” the story of the birth and adventures of the mythical bard Taliesin, the Amergin of Cymric legend, is not found in the fourteenth-century manuscript entitled “The Red Book of Hergest.” It is taken from a manuscript of the late sixteenth or seventeenth century, and never appears to have enjoyed much popularity in Wales. Much of the very obscure poetry attributed to Taliesin is to be found in it, and this is much older than the prose. The object of the tale, indeed, as Mr. Nutt has pointed out in his edition of the “Mabinogion,” is rather to provide a sort of framework for stringing together scattered pieces of verse supposed to be the work of Taliesin than to tell a connected story about him and his doings.

The story of the birth of the hero is the most interesting thing in the tale. There lived, it was said, “in the time of Arthur of the Round Table,”<sup>177</sup> a man named Tegid Voel of Penllyn, whose wife was named Ceridwen. They have a son named Avagddu, who was the most ill-favoured man in the world. To compensate for his lack of beauty, his mother resolved to make him a sage. So, according to the art of the books of Feryllt,<sup>178</sup> she had recourse to the great Celtic source of magical influence—a cauldron. She began to boil a “cauldron of inspiration and science for her son, that his reception might be honourable because of his knowledge of the mysteries of the future state of the world.” The cauldron might not cease to boil for a

year and a day, and only in three drops of it were to be found the magical grace of the brew.

She put Gwion Bach the son of Gwreang of Llanfair to stir the cauldron, and a blind man named Morda to keep the fire going, and she made incantations over it and put in magical herbs from time to time as Feryllt's book directed. But one day towards the end of the year three drops of the magic liquor flew out of the cauldron and lighted on the finger of Gwion. Like Finn mac Cumhal on a similar occasion, he put his finger in his mouth, and immediately became gifted with supernatural insight. He saw that he had got what was intended for Avagddu, and he saw also that Ceridwen would destroy him for it if she could. So he fled to his own land, and the cauldron, deprived of the sacred drops, now contained nothing but poison, the power of which burst the vessel, and the liquor ran into a stream hard by and poisoned the horses of Gwyddno Garanhir which drank of the water. Whence the stream is called the Poison of the Horses of Gwyddno from that time forth.

Ceridwen now came on the scene and saw that her year's labour was lost. In her rage she smote Morda with a billet of firewood and struck out his eye, and she then pursued after Gwion Bach. He saw her and changed himself into a hare. She became a greyhound. He leaped into a river and became a fish, and she chased him as an otter. He became a bird and she a hawk. Then he turned himself into a grain of wheat and dropped among the other grains on a threshing-floor, and she became a black hen and swallowed him. Nine months afterwards she bore him as an infant; and she would have killed him, but could not on account of his beauty, "so she wrapped him in a leathern bag, and cast him into the sea to the mercy of God."

### **The Luck of Elphin**

Now Gwyddno, of the poisoned horses, had a salmon weir on the strand between Dyvi and Aberystwyth. And his son Elphin, a needy and luckless lad, one day fished out the leathern bag as it stuck on the weir. They opened

it, and found the infant within. "Behold a radiant brow!"<sup>179</sup> said Gwyddno. "Taliesin be he called," said Elphin. And they brought the child home very carefully and reared it as their own. And this was Taliesin, prime bard of the Cymry; and the first of the poems he made was a lay of praise to Elphin and promise of good fortune for the future. And this was fulfilled, for Elphin grew in riches and honour day after day, and in love and favour with King Arthur.

But one day as men praised King Arthur and all his belongings above measure, Elphin boasted that he had a wife as virtuous as any at Arthur's Court and a bard more skilful than any of the King's; and they flung him into prison until they should see if he could make good his boast. And as he lay there with a silver chain about his feet, a graceless fellow named Rhun was sent to court the wife of Elphin and to bring back proofs of her folly; and it was said that neither maid nor matron with whom Rhun conversed but was evil-spoken of.

Taliesin then bade his mistress conceal herself, and she gave her raiment and jewels to one of the kitchenmaids, who received Rhun as if she were mistress of the household. And after supper Rhun plied the maid with drink, and she became intoxicated and fell in a deep sleep; whereupon Rhun cut off one of her fingers, on which was the signet-ring of Elphin that he had sent his wife a little while before. Rhun brought the finger and the ring on it to Arthur's Court.

Next day Elphin was fetched out of prison and shown the finger and the ring. Whereupon he said: "With thy leave, mighty king, I cannot deny the ring, but the finger it is on was never my wife's. For this is the little finger, and the ring fits tightly on it, but my wife could barely keep it on her thumb. And my wife, moreover, is wont to pare her nails every Saturday night, but this nail hath not been pared for a month. And thirdly, the hand to which this finger belonged was kneading rye-dough within three days past, but my wife has never kneaded rye-dough since my wife she has been."

Then the King was angry because his test had failed, and he ordered Elphin back to prison till he could prove what he had affirmed about his bard.



## **Taliesin, Prime Bard of Britain**

Then Taliesin went to court, and one high day when the King's bards and minstrels should sing and play before him, Taliesin, as they passed him sitting quietly in a corner, pouted his lips and played “Blerwm, blerwm” with his finger on his mouth. And when the bards came to perform before the King, lo ! a spell was on them, and they could do nothing but bow before him and play “Blerwm, blerwm” with their fingers on their lips. And the chief of them, Heinin, said: “O king, we be not drunken with wine, but are dumb through the influence of the spirit that sits in yon corner under the form of a child.” Then Taliesin was brought forth, and they asked him who he was and whence he came. And he sang as follows:

“Primary chief bard am I to Elphin,  
And my original country is the region of the summer stars;  
Idno and Heinin called me Merddin,  
At length every being will call me Taliesin.

“I was with my Lord in the highest sphere,  
On the fall of Lucifer into the depth of hell;  
I have borne a banner before Alexander;  
I know the names of the stars from north to south

“I was in Canaan when Absalom was slain,  
I was in the court of Dōn before the birth of Gwydion.  
I was at the place of the crucifixion of the merciful Son of  
God;  
I have been three periods in the prison of Arianrod.

“I have been in Asia with Noah in the ark,  
I have seen the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.  
I have been in India when Roma was built.  
I am now come here to the remnant of Troia.<sup>180</sup>

“I have been with my Lord in the ass's manger,  
I strengthened Moses through the waters of Jordan;  
I have been in the firmament with Mary Magdalene;  
I have obtained the Muse from the cauldron of Ceridwen.

“I shall be until the day of doom on the face of the earth;  
And it is not known whether my body is flesh or fish.

“Then was I for nine months  
In the womb of the witch Ceridwen;  
I was originally little Gwion,  
And at length I am Taliesin.”<sup>181</sup>

While Taliesin sang a great storm of wind arose, and the castle shook with the force of it. Then the King bade Elphin be brought in before him, and when he came, at the music of Taliesin's voice and harp the chains fell open of themselves and he was free. And many other poems concerning secret things of the past and future did Taliesin sing before the King and his lords, and he foretold the coming of the Saxon into the land, and his oppression of the Cymry, and foretold also his passing away when the day of his destiny should come.

## **Conclusion**

Here we end this long survey of the legendary literature of the Celt. The material is very abundant, and it is, of course, not practicable in a volume of this size to do more than trace the main current of the development of the legendary literature down to the time when the mythical and legendary element entirely faded out and free literary invention took its place. The reader of these pages will, however, it is hoped, have gained a general conception of the subject which will enable him to understand the significance of such tales as we have not been able to touch on here, and to fit them into their proper places in one or other of the great cycles of Celtic legend. It will be noticed that we have not entered upon the vast region of

Celtic folk-lore. Folk-lore has not been regarded as falling within the scope of the present work. Folk-lore may sometimes represent degraded mythology, and sometimes mythology in the making. In either case, it is its special characteristic that it belongs to and issues from a class whose daily life lies close to the earth, toilers in the field and in the forest, who render with simple directness, in tales or charms, their impressions of natural or supernatural forces with which their own lives are environed. Mythology, in the proper sense of the word, appears only where the intellect and the imagination have reached a point of development above that which is ordinarily possible to the peasant mind—when men have begun to co-ordinate their scattered impressions and have felt the impulse to shape them into poetic creations embodying universal ideas. It is not, of course, pretended that a hard-and-fast line can always be drawn between mythology and folk-lore; still, the distinction seems to me a valid one, and I have tried to observe it in these pages.

After the two historical chapters with which our study has begun, the object of the book has been literary rather than scientific. I have, however, endeavoured to give, as the opportunity arose, such results of recent critical work on the relics of Celtic myth and legend as may at least serve to indicate to the reader the nature of the critical problems connected therewith. I hope that this may have added somewhat to the value of the work for students, while not impairing its interest for the general reader. Furthermore, I may claim that the book is in this sense scientific, that as far as possible it avoids any adaptation of its material for the popular taste. Such adaptation, when done for an avowed artistic purpose, is of course entirely legitimate; if it were not, we should have to condemn half the great poetry of the world. But here the object has been to present the myths and legends of the Celt as they actually are. Crudities have not been refined away, things painful or monstrous have not been suppressed, except in some few instances, where it has been necessary to bear in mind that this volume appeals to a wider audience than that of scientific students alone. The reader may, I think, rely upon it that he has here a substantially fair and not over-idealised account of the Celtic outlook upon life and the world at a time

when the Celt still had a free, independent, natural life, working out his conceptions in the Celtic tongue, and taking no more from foreign sources than he could assimilate and make his own. The legendary literature thus presented is the oldest non-classical literature of Europe. This alone is sufficient, I think, to give it a strong claim on our attention. As to what other claims it may have, many pages might be filled with quotations from the discerning praises given to it by critics not of Celtic nationality, from Matthew Arnold downwards. But here let it speak for itself. It will tell us, I believe, that, as Maeldūn said of one of the marvels he met with in his voyage into Fairyland: “What we see here was a work of mighty men.”

- [1.](#) Dealgnaid. I have been obliged here, as occasionally elsewhere, to modify the Irish names so as to make them pronounceable by English readers.
- [2.](#) See p. 48, *note* 1.
- [3.](#) I follow in this narrative R.I. Best's translation of the “Irish Mythological Cycle” of d'Arbois de Jubainville.
- [4.](#) De Jubainville, “Irish Mythological Cycle,” p. 75.
- [5.](#) Pronounced “Yeo’hee.” See Glossary for this and other words.
- [6.](#) The science of the Druids, as we have seen, was conveyed in verse, and the professional poets were a branch of the Druidic Order.
- [7.](#) Meyer and Nutt, “Voyage of Bran,” ii. 197.
- [8.](#) “Moytura” means “The Plain of the Towers”—*i.e.*, sepulchral monuments.
- [9.](#) Shakespeare alludes to this in “As You Like It.” “I never was so be-rhymed,” says Rosalind, “since Pythagoras' time, that I was an Irish rat—which I can hardly remember.”
- [10.](#) Lyons, Leyden, Laon were all in ancient times known as *Lug-dunum*, the Fortress of Lugh. *Luguvallum* was the name of a town near Hadrian's Wall in Roman Britain.
- [11.](#) It is given by him in a note to the “Four Masters,” vol. i. p. 18, and is also reproduced by de Jubainville.
- [12.](#) The other two were “The Fate of the Children of Lir” and “The Fate of the Sons of Usna.” The stories of the Quest of the Sons of Turenn and that of the Children of Lir have been told in full by the author in his “High Deeds of Finn and other Bardic Romances,” and that of the “Sons of Usna” (the Deirdre Legend) by Miss Eleanor Hull in her “Cuchulain,” both published by Harrap and Co
- [13.](#) O'Curry's translation from the bardic tale, “The Battle of Moytura.”
- [14.](#) O'Curry, “Manners and Customs,” iii. 214.

- [15.](#) The ancient Irish division of the year contained only these three seasons, including autumn in summer (O'Curry, "Manners and Customs," iii. 217).
- [16.](#) S.H. O'Grady, "Silva Gadelica," p. 191.
- [17.](#) Pp. 104 *sqq.*, and *passim*.
- [18.](#) O'Grady, *loc. cit.*
- [19.](#) O'Grady, *loc. cit.*
- [20.](#) See p. 112.
- [21.](#) Miss Hull has discussed this subject fully in the introduction to her invaluable work, "The Cuchullin Saga."
- [22.](#) See the tale of "Etain and Midir," in Chap. IV.
- [23.](#) The name Tara is derived from an oblique case of the nominative *Teamhair*, meaning "the place of the wide prospect." It is now a broad grassy hill, in Co. Meath, covered with earthworks representing the sites of the ancient royal buildings, which can all be clearly located from ancient descriptions.
- [24.](#) A.H. Leahy, "Heroic Romances," i. 27.
- [25.](#) See p. 114.
- [26.](#) I cannot agree with Mr. O'Grady's identification of this goddess with Dana, though the name appears to mean "The Great Queen."
- [27.](#) Gerald, the fourth Earl of Desmond. He disappeared, it is said, in 1398, and the legend goes that he still lives beneath the waters of Loch Gur, and may be seen riding round its banks on his white steed once every seven years. He was surnamed "Gerald the Poet" from the "witty and ingenious" verses he composed in Gaelic. Wizardry, poetry, and science were all united in one conception in the mind of the ancient Irish.
- [28.](#) "Popular Tales of Ireland," by D. Fitzgerald, in "Revue Celtique," vol. iv.
- [29.](#) "The Voyage of Bran," vol. ii. p. 219.
- [30.](#) In Irish, *Sionnain*.
- [31.](#) Translation by R.I. Best.
- [32.](#) The solar vessels found in dolmen carvings. See Chap. II. p. 71 *sqq.* Note that the Celtic spirits, though invisible, are material and have weight; not so those in Vergil and Dante.
- [33.](#) De Jubainville, "Irish Mythological Cycle," p. 136. Beltené is the modern Irish name for the month of May, and is derived from an ancient root preserved in the Old Irish compound *epelta*, "dead."
- [34.](#) "Irish Mythological Cycle," p. 138.
- [35.](#) I follow again de Jubainville's translation; but in connexion with this and the previous poems see also Ossianic Society's "Transactions," vol. v.
- [36.](#) Teltin; so named after the goddess Telta. See p. 103.

- [37.](#) Pronounced “Shee.” It means literally the People of the (Fairy) Mounds.
- [38.](#) Pronounced “Eefa.”
- [39.](#) This name means “The Maid of the Fair Shoulder.”
- [40.](#) The story here summarised is given in full in the writer's “High Deeds of Finn” (Harrap and Co.).
- [41.](#) It may be mentioned that the syllable “Kill,” which enters into so many Irish place-names (Kilkenny, Killiney, Kilcooley, &c.), usually represents the Latin *cella*, a monastic cell, shrine, or church.
- [42.](#) Cleena (*Clíodhna*) was a Danaan princess about whom a legend is told connected with the Bay of Glandore in Co. Cork. See p. 127.
- [43.](#) See p. 85.
- [44.](#) “Omnia monumenta Scotorum ante Cimbaoth incerta erant.” Tierna, who died in 1088, was Abbot of Clonmacnois, a great monastic and educational centre in mediæval Ireland.
- [45.](#) Compare the fine poem of a modern Celtic writer (Sir Samuel Ferguson), “The Widow's Cloak”—*i.e.*, the British Empire in the days of Queen Victoria.
- [46.](#) “Critical History of Ireland,” p. 180.
- [47.](#) Pronounced “El’yill.”
- [48.](#) The ending *ster* in three of the names of the Irish provinces is of Norse origin, and is a relic of the Viking conquests in Ireland. Connacht, where the Vikings did not penetrate, alone preserves its Irish name unmodified. Ulster (in Irish *Ulaidh*) is supposed to derive its name from Ollav Fōla, Munster (*Mumhan*) from King Eocho Mumho, tenth in succession from Eremon, and Connacht was “the land of the children of Conn”—he who was called Conn of the Hundred Battles, and who died A.D. 157.
- [49.](#) The reader may, however, be referred to the tale of Etain and Midir as given in full by A.H. Leahy (“Heroic Romances of Ireland”), and by the writer in his “High Deeds of Finn,” and to the tale of Conary rendered by Sir S. Ferguson (“Poems,” 1886), in what Dr. Whitley Stokes has described as the noblest poem ever written by an Irishman.
- [50.](#) Pronounced “Yeo’hee.”
- [51.](#) I quote Mr. A.H. Leahy's translation from a fifteenth-century Egerton manuscript (“Heroic Romances of Ireland,” vol. i. p. 12). The story is, however, found in much more ancient authorities.
- [52.](#) Ogham letters, which were composed of straight lines arranged in a certain order about the axis formed by the edge of a squared pillar-stone, were used for sepulchral inscription and writing generally before the introduction of the Roman alphabet in Ireland.
- [53.](#) The reference is to the magic swine of Mananan, which were killed and eaten afresh every day, and whose meat preserved the eternal youth of the People of Dana.
- [54.](#) See p. 124.

- [55.](#) The meaning quoted will be found in the Dictionary under the alternative form *geas*
- [56.](#) I quote from Whitley Stokes' translation, *Revue Celtique*, January 1901, and succeeding numbers.
- [57.](#) Bregia was the great plain lying eastwards of Tara between Boyne and Liffey
- [58.](#) "The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel."
- [59.](#) Pronounced "Koohoo'lin."
- [60.](#) See p. 150.
- [61.](#) See pp. 121-123 for an account of this deity.
- [62.](#) It is noticeable that among the characters figuring in the Ultonian legendary cycle many names occur of which the word *Cu* (hound) forms a part. Thus we have Curoi, Cucorb, Beālcu, &c. The reference is no doubt to the Irish wolf-hound, a fine type of valour and beauty.
- [63.](#) Now Lusk, a village on the coast a few miles north of Dublin.
- [64.](#) Owing to the similarity of the name the supernatural country of Skatha, "the Shadowy," was early identified with the islands of Skye, where the Cuchulain Peaks still bear witness to the legend.
- [65.](#) This, of course, was Cuchulain's father, Lugh.
- [66.](#) This means probably "the belly spear." With this terrible weapon Cuchulain was fated in the end to slay his friend Ferdia.
- [67.](#) See genealogical table, p. 181.
- [68.](#) Miss Hull, "The Cuchullin Saga," p. lxxii, where the solar theory of the Brown Bull is dealt with at length.
- [69.](#) A *cumal* was the unit of value in Celtic Ireland. It is mentioned as such by St. Patrick. It meant the price of a woman-slave.
- [70.](#) The cune laid on them by Macha. See p. 180.
- [71.](#) Cuchulain, as the son of the god Lugh, was not subject to the curse of Macha which afflicted the other Ultonians.
- [72.](#) His reputed father, the mortal husband of Deictera
- [73.](#) In the Irish bardic literature, as in the Homeric epics, chastity formed no part of the masculine ideal either for gods or men.
- [74.](#) "The Ford of the Forked Pole."
- [75.](#) I quote from Standish Hayes O'Grady's translation, in Miss Hull's "Cuchullin Saga."
- [76.](#) *Ath Fherdia*, which is pronounced and now spelt "Ardee." It is in Co. Louth, at the southern border of the Plain of Murthemney, which was Cuchulain's territory.
- [77.](#) See p. 126.

- [78.](#) In ancient Ireland there were five provinces, Munster being counted as two, or, as some ancient authorities explain it, the High King's territory in Meath and Westmeath being reckoned a separate province.
- [79.](#) "Clan" in Gaelic means children or offspring. Clan Calatin=the sons of Calatin.
- [80.](#) Together with much that is wild and barbaric in this Irish epic of the "Tain" the reader will be struck by the ideals of courtesy and gentleness which not infrequently come to light in it. It must be remembered that, as Mr. A.H. Leahy points out in his "Heroic Romances of Ireland," the legend of the Raid of Quelgny is, at the very latest, a century earlier than all other known romances of chivalry, Welsh or Continental. It is found in the "Book of Leinster," a manuscript of the twelfth century, as well as in other sources, and was doubtless considerably older than the date of its transcription there. "The whole thing," says Mr. Leahy, "stands at the very beginning of the literature of modern Europe."
- [81.](#) Another instance of the survival of the oath formula recited by the Celtic envoys to Alexander the Great. See p. 23.
- [82.](#) "Rising-out" is the vivid expression used by Irish writers for a clan or territory going on the war-path. "Hosting" is also used in a similar sense.
- [83.](#) See p. 130.
- [84.](#) The sword of Fergus was a fairy weapon called the *Caladcholg* (hard dinter), a name of which Arthur's more famous "Excalibur" is a Latinised corruption.
- [85.](#) The reference is to Deirdre.
- [86.](#) See p. 211.
- [87.](#) A.H. Leahy's translation, "Heroic Romances of Ireland," vol. i.
- [88.](#) The cloak of Mananan (see p. 125) typifies the sea—here, in its dividing and estranging power.
- [89.](#) This Curoi appears in various tales of the Ultonian Cycle with attributes which show that he was no mortal king, but a local deity.
- [90.](#) This apparition of the Washer of the Ford is of frequent occurrence in Irish legend.
- [91.](#) See p. 164 for the reference to *geis*. "His namesake" refers, of course, to the story of the Hound of Cullan, pp. 183, 184.
- [92.](#) It was a point of honour to refuse nothing to a bard; one king is said to have given his eye when it was demanded of him.
- [93.](#) *Craobh Ruadh*—the Red Branch hostel.
- [94.](#) The story is told in full in the author's "High Deeds of Finn."
- [95.](#) Pronounced "Bay-al-koo."
- [96.](#) Inis Clothrann, now known as Quaker's Island. The pool no longer exists.
- [97.](#) "Youb'dan."
- [98.](#) Dr. P. W. Joyce's "Irish Names of Places" is a storehouse of information on this subject.



[99.](#) P. 211, *note*.

[100.](#) The name is given both to the hill, *ard*, and to the ford, *atha* beneath it.

[101.](#) Pronounced “mac Cool.”

[102.](#) Pronounced “Usheen.”

[103.](#) Subject, of course, to the possibility that the present revival of Gaelic as a spoken tongue may lead to the opening of a new chapter in that history.

[104.](#) See “Ossian and Ossianic Literature,” by Alfred Nutt, p. 4.

[105.](#) Now Castleknock, near Dublin.

[106.](#) In the King's County.

[107.](#) The hill still bears the name, Knockanar.

[108.](#) Glanismole, near Dublin.

[109.](#) Talkenn, or “Adze-head,” was a name given to St. Patrick by the Irish. Probably it referred to the shape of his tonsure.

[110.](#) Pronounced “Sleeve-na-mon’”: accent on last syllable. It means the Mountain of the (Fairy) Women.

[111.](#) Translation by S.H. O'Grady.

[112.](#) See p. 105.

[113.](#) Examples of these have been published, with translations, in the “Transactions of the Ossianic Society.”

[114.](#) Taken down from the recital of a peasant in Co. Galway and published at Rennes in Dr. Hyde's “An Sgeuluidhe Gaodhalach,” vol. ii. (no translation).

[115.](#) Now Athlone (*Atha Luain*).

[116.](#) How significant is this naïve indication that the making of forays on his neighbours was regarded in Celtic Ireland as the natural and laudable occupation of a country gentleman! Compare Spenser's account of the ideals fostered by the Irish bards of his time, “View of the Present State of Ireland,” p. 641 (Globe edition).

[117.](#) Dr. John Todhunter, in his “Three Irish Bardic Tales,” has alone, I think, kept the antique ending of the tale of Deirdre.

[118.](#) “Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition,” Argyllshire Series. The tale was taken down in verse, word for word, from the dictation of Roderick mac Fadyen in Tiree, 1868.

[119.](#) Here we have evidently a reminiscence of Bricriu of the Poisoned Tongue, the mischief-maker of the Ultonians.

[120.](#) The Arans are three islands at the entrance of Galway Bay. They are a perfect museum of mysterious ruins.

[121.](#) Pronounced “Ghermawn”—the “G” hard.

- [122.](#) Horse-racing was a particular delight to the ancient Irish, and is mentioned in a ninth-century poem in praise of May as one of the attractions of that month. The name of the month of May given in an ancient Gaulish calendar means “the month of horse-racing.”
- [123.](#) The same phenomenon is recorded as being witnessed by Peredur in the Welsh tale of that name in the “Mabinogion.”
- [124.](#) Like the bridge to Skatha't dūn, p. 188.
- [125.](#) Probably we are to understand that he was an anchorite seeking for an islet on which to dwell in solitude and contemplation. The western islands of Ireland abound in the ruins of huts and oratories built by single monks or little communities.
- [126.](#) Tennyson has been particularly happy in his description of these undersea islands.
- [127.](#) Ps. ciii. 5.
- [128.](#) This disposes of the last of the foster-brothers, who should not have joined the party.
- [129.](#) Tory Island, off the Donegal coast. There was there a monastery and a church dedicated to St. Columba.
- [130.](#) “One day we shall delight in the remembrance of these things.” The quotation is from Vergil, “Æn.” i. 203 “Sacred poet” is a translation of the *vates sacer* of Horace.
- [131.](#) This sage and poet has not been identified from any other record. Praise and thanks to him, whoever he may have been.
- [132.](#) “The Mabinogion,” pp. 45 and 54.
- [133.](#) Pronounced “Annoon.” It was the word used in the early literature for Hades or Fairyland.
- [134.](#) “Barddas,” vol. i. pp. 224 *sqq.*
- [135.](#) Strange as it may seem to us, the character of this object was by no means fixed from the beginning. In the poem of Wolfram von Eschenbach it is a stone endowed with magical properties. The word is derived by the early fabulists from *gréable*, something pleasant to possess and enjoy, and out of which one could have *à son gré*, whatever he chose of good things. The Grail legend will be dealt with later in connexion with the Welsh tale “Peredur.”
- [136.](#) Distinguished by these from the other great storehouse of poetic legend, the *Matière de Bretagne*—i.e., the Arthurian saga.
- [137.](#) See p. 103.
- [138.](#) “Cultur der Gegenwart,” i. ix.
- [139.](#) A list of them is given in Lobineau's “Histoire de Bretagne.”
- [140.](#) See, e.g., pp. 243 and 218, *note*.
- [141.](#) See p. 233, and a similar case in the author's “High Deeds of Finn,” p. 82.
- [142.](#) See p. 232, and the tale of the recovery of the “Tain,” p. 234.
- [143.](#) “Pwyll King of Dyfed,” “Bran and Branwen,” “Math Sor of Māthonwy,” and “Manawyddan Son of Llŷr.”

- [144.](#) See p. 107.
- [145.](#) "Hibbert Lectures," pp. 237-240.
- [146.](#) See pp. 88, 109, &c. Lugh, of course, = Lux, Light. The Celtic words *Lamh* and *Llaw* were used indifferently for hand or arm.
- [147.](#) Mr. Squire, in his "Mythology of the British Islands," 1905, has brought together in a clear and attractive form the most recent results of studies on this subject.
- [148.](#) Finn and Gwyn are respectively the Gaelic and Cymric forms of the same name, meaning fair or white.
- [149.](#) "Mythology of the British Islands," p. 225.
- [150.](#) The sense appears to be doubtful here, and is variously rendered.
- [151.](#) Lloegyr = Saxon Britain.
- [152.](#) Rhys, "Hibbert Lectures," quoting from the ancient saga of Merlin published by the English Text Society, p. 693.
- [153.](#) "Mythology of the British Islands," pp. 325, 326; and Rhys, "Hibbert Lectures," p. 155 *sqq.*
- [154.](#) In the "Iolo MSS.," collected by Edward Williams.
- [155.](#) See, *e.g.*, pp. 111, 272.
- [156.](#) We see here that we have got far from primitive Celtic legend. The heroes fight like mediaeval knights on horseback, tilting at each other with spears, not in chariots or on foot, and not with the strange weapons which figure in Gaelic battle-tales.
- [157.](#) Hēn, "the Ancient"; an epithet generally implying a hoary antiquity associated with mythological tradition.
- [158.](#) Pronounced "Pry-dair'y."
- [159.](#) Evidently this was the triangular Norman shield, not the round or oval Celtic one. It has already been noticed that in these Welsh tales the knights when they fight tilt at each other with spears.
- [160.](#) The reader may pronounce this "Matholaw."
- [161.](#) Compare the description of Mac Cecht in the tale of the Hostel of De Derga, p. 173.
- [162.](#) Where the Tower of London now stands.
- [163.](#) These stories, in Ireland and in Wales, always attach themselves to actual burial-places. In 1813 a funeral urn containing ashes and half-burnt bones was found in the spot traditionally supposed to be Branwen's sepulchre.
- [164.](#) Saxon Britain.
- [165.](#) This is a distorted reminiscence of the practice which seems to have obtained in the courts of Welsh princes, that a high officer should hold the king's feet in his lap while he sat at meat.
- [166.](#) "Hawthorn, King of the Giants."

- [167.](#) The gods of the family of Dōn are thus conceived as servitors to Arthur, who in this story is evidently the god Artaius.
- [168.](#) “She of the White Track.” Compare the description of Etain, pp. 157, 158.
- [169.](#) There is no other mention of this Kenverchyn or of how Owain got his raven-army, also referred to in “The Dream of Rhonabwy.” We have here evidently a piece of antique mythology embedded in a more modern fabric.
- [170.](#) Like the Breton Tale of “Peronnik the Fool,” translated in “Le Foyer Bréton,” by Emile Souvestre. The syllable *Per* which occurs in all forms of the hero's name means in Welsh and Cornish a bowl or vessel (Irish *coire*—see p. 35, note). No satisfactory derivation has in any case been found of the latter part of the name.
- [171.](#) “They are nourished by a stone of most noble nature ... it is called *lapsit exillīs*; the stone is also called the Grail.” The term *lapsit exillīs* appears to be a corruption for *lapis ex celis*, “the stone from heaven.”
- [172.](#) The true derivation is from the Low Latin *cratella*, a small vessel or chalice.
- [173.](#) A similar selective action is ascribed to the Grail by Wolfram. It can only be lifted by a pure maiden when carried into the hall, and a heathen cannot see it or be benefited by it. The same idea is also strongly marked in the story narrating the early history of the Grail by Robert de Borron, about 1210: the impure and sinful cannot benefit by it. Borron, however, does not touch upon the Perceval or “quest” portion of the story at all.
- [174.](#) Hades.
- [175.](#) Caer Vedwyd means the Castle of Revelry. I follow the version of this poem given by Squire in his “Mythology of the British Islands,” where it may be read in full.
- [176.](#) The combination of objects at the Grail Castle is very significant. They were a sword, a spear, and a vessel, or, in some versions, a stone. These are the magical treasures brought by the Danaans into Ireland—a sword, a spear, a cauldron, and a stone. See pp. 105, 106.
- [177.](#) The Round Table finds no mention in Cymric legend earlier than the fifteenth century.
- [178.](#) Vergil, in his mediæval character of magician.
- [179.](#) Taliesin.
- [180.](#) Alluding to the imaginary Trojan ancestry of the Britons.
- [181.](#) I have somewhat abridged this curious poem. The connexion with ideas of transmigration, as in the legend of Tuan mac Carell (see pp. 97-101), is obvious. Tuan's last stage, it may be recalled, was a fish, and Taliesin was taken in a salmon-weir.

# The Mabinogion

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## Introduction

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Whilst engaged on the Translations contained in these volumes, and on the Notes appended to the various Tales, I have found myself led unavoidably into a much more extensive course of reading than I had originally contemplated, and one which in great measure bears directly upon the earlier Mediæval Romance.

Before commencing these labours, I was aware, generally, that there existed a connexion between the Welsh Mabinogion and the Romance of the Continent; but as I advanced, I became better acquainted with the

closeness and extent of that connexion, its history, and the proofs by which it is supported.

At the same time, indeed, I became aware, and still strongly feel, that it is one thing to collect facts, and quite another to classify and draw from them their legitimate conclusions; and though I am loth that what has been collected with some pains, should be entirely thrown away, it is unwillingly, and with diffidence, that I trespass beyond the acknowledged province of a translator.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there arose into general notoriety in Europe, a body of "Romance," which in various forms retained its popularity till the Reformation. In it the plot, the incidents, the characters, were almost wholly those of Chivalry, that bond which united the warriors of France, Spain, and Italy, with those of pure Teutonic descent, and embraced more or less firmly all the nations of Europe, excepting only the Slavonic races, not yet risen to power, and the Celts, who had fallen from it. It is not difficult to account for this latter omission. The Celts, driven from the plains into the mountains and islands, preserved their liberty, and hated their oppressors with fierce, and not causeless, hatred. A proud and free people, isolated both in country and language, were not likely to adopt customs which implied brotherhood with their foes.

Such being the case, it is remarkable that when the chief romances are examined, the name of many of the heroes and their scenes of action are found to be Celtic, and those of persons and places famous in the traditions of Wales and Brittany. Of this the romances of Ywaine and Gawaine, Sir Perceval de Galles, Eric and Enide, Mort d'Arthur, Sir Lancelot, Sir Tristan, the Graal, &c., may be cited as examples. In some cases a tendency to triads, and other matters of internal evidence, point in the same direction.

It may seem difficult to account for this. Although the ancient dominion of the Celts over Europe is not without enduring evidence in the names of the mountains and streams, the great features of a country, yet the loss of their prior language by the great mass of the Celtic nations in Southern Europe (if indeed their successors in territory be at all of their blood), prevents us from clearly seeing, and makes us wonder, how stories,

originally embodied in the Celtic dialects of Great Britain and France, could so influence the literature of nations to whom the Celtic languages were utterly unknown. Whence then came these internal marks, and these proper names of persons and places, the features of a story usually of earliest date and least likely to change?

These romances were found in England, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and even Iceland, as early as the beginning of the thirteenth and end of the twelfth century. The Germans, who propagated them through the nations of the North, derived them certainly from France. Robert Wace published his Anglo-Norman Romance of the Brut d'Angleterre about 1155. Sir Tristan was written in French prose in 1170; and The Chevalier au Lion, Chevalier de l'Epée, and Sir Lancelot du Lac, in metrical French, by Chrestien de Troyes, before 1200.

From these facts it is to be argued that the further back these romances are traced, the more clearly does it appear that they spread over the Continent from the North-west of France. The older versions, it may be remarked, are far more simple than the later corruptions. In them there is less allusion to the habits and usages of Chivalry, and the Welsh names and elements stand out in stronger relief. It is a great step to be able to trace the stocks of these romances back to Wace, or to his country and age. For Wace's work was not original. He himself, a native of Jersey, appears to have derived much of it from the "Historia Britonum" of Gruffydd ab Arthur, commonly known as "Geoffrey of Monmouth," born 1128, who himself professes to have translated from a British original. It is, however, very possible that Wace may have had access, like Geoffrey, to independent sources of information.

To the claims set up on behalf of Wace and Geoffrey, to be regarded as the channels by which the Cymric tales passed into the Continental Romance, may be added those of a third almost contemporary author. Layamon, a Saxon priest, dwelling, about 1200, upon the banks of the upper Severn, acknowledges for the source of his British history, the *English* Bede, the *Latin* Albin, and the *French* Wace. The last-named however is by very much his chief, and, for Welsh matters, his only avowed

authority. His book, nevertheless, contains a number of names and stories relating to Wales, of which no traces appear in Wace, or indeed in Geoffrey, but which he was certainly in a very favourable position to obtain for himself. Layamon, therefore, not only confirms Geoffrey in some points, but it is clear, that, professing to follow Wace, he had independent access to the great body of Welsh literature then current. Sir F. Madden has put this matter very clearly, in his recent edition of Layamon. The Abbé de la Rue, also, was of opinion that Gaimar, an Anglo-Norman, in the reign of Stephen, usually regarded as a translator of Geoffrey of Monmouth, had access to a Welsh independent authority.

In addition to these, is to be mentioned the English version of Sir Tristrem, which Sir Walter Scott considered to be derived from a distinct Celtic source, and not, like the later Amadis, Palmerin, and Lord Berners's Canon of Romance, imported into English literature by translation from the French. For the *Auntours of Arthur*, recently published by the Camden Society, their Editor, Mr. Robson, seems to hint at a similar claim.

Here then are various known channels, by which portions of Welsh and Armoric fiction crossed the Celtic border, and gave rise to the more ornate, and widely-spread romance of the Age of Chivalry. It is not improbable that there may have existed many others. It appears then that a large portion of the stocks of Mediæval Romance proceeded from Wales. We have next to see in what condition they are still found in that country.

That Wales possessed an ancient literature, containing various lyric compositions, and certain triads, in which are arranged historical facts or moral aphorisms, has been shown by Sharon Turner, who has established the high antiquity of many of these compositions.

The more strictly Romantic Literature of Wales has been less fortunate, though not less deserving of critical attention. Small portions only of it have hitherto appeared in print, the remainder being still hidden in the obscurity of ancient Manuscripts: of these the chief is supposed to be the Red Book of Hergest, now in the Library of Jesus College, Oxford, and of the fourteenth century. This contains, besides poems, the prose romances known as *Mabinogion*. The Black Book of Caermarthen, preserved at Hengwrt, and



considered not to be of later date than the twelfth century, is said to contain poems only.<sup>1</sup>

The Mabinogion, however, though thus early recorded in the Welsh tongue, are in their existing form by no means wholly Welsh. They are of two tolerably distinct classes. Of these, the older contains few allusions to Norman customs, manners, arts, arms, and luxuries. The other, and less ancient, are full of such allusions, and of ecclesiastical terms. Both classes, no doubt, are equally of Welsh root, but the former are not more overlaid or corrupted, than might have been expected, from the communication that so early took place between the Normans and the Welsh; whereas the latter probably migrated from Wales, and were brought back and re-translated after an absence of centuries, with a load of Norman additions. *Kilhwch and Olwen*, and the dream of *Rhonabwy*, may be cited as examples of the older and purer class; the *Lady of the Fountain*, *Peredur*, and *Geraint ab Erbin*, of the later, or decorated.

Besides these, indeed, there are a few tales, as *Amlyn and Amic*, *Sir Bevis of Hamtoun*, the *Seven Wise Masters*, and the story of *Charlemagne*, so obviously of foreign extraction, and of late introduction into Wales, not presenting even a Welsh name, or allusion, and of such very slender intrinsic merit, that although comprised in the *Llyvr Coch*, they have not a shadow of claim to form part of the Canon of Welsh Romance. Therefore, although I have translated and examined them, I have given them no place in these volumes.

There is one argument in favour of the high antiquity in Wales of many of the Mabinogion, which deserves to be mentioned here. This argument is founded on the topography of the country. It is found that Saxon names of places are very frequently definitions of the nature of the locality to which they are attached, as *Clifton*, *Deepden*, *Bridge-ford*, *Thorpe*, *Ham*, *Wick*, and the like; whereas those of Wales are more frequently commemorative of some event, real or supposed, said to have happened on or near the spot, or bearing allusion to some person renowned in the story of the country or district. Such are "*Llyn y Morwynion*," the Lake of the Maidens; "*Rhyd y Bedd*," the Ford of the Grave; "*Bryn Cyfergyr*," the Hill of Assault; and so

on. But as these names could not have preceded the events to which they refer, the events themselves must be not unfrequently as old as the early settlement in the country. And as some of these events and fictions are the subjects of, and are explained by, existing Welsh legends, it follows that the legends must be, in some shape or other, of very remote antiquity. It will be observed that this argument supports *remote* antiquity only for such legends as are connected with the greater topographical features, as mountains, lakes, rivers, seas, which must have been named at an early period in the inhabitation of the country by man. But there exist, also, legends connected with the lesser features, as pools, hills, detached rocks, caves, fords, and the like, places not necessarily named by the earlier settlers, but the names of which are, nevertheless, probably very old, since the words of which they are composed are in many cases not retained in the colloquial tongue, in which they must once have been included, and are in some instances lost from the language altogether, so much so as to be only partially explicable even by scholars. The argument applies likewise, in their degree, to camps, barrows, and other artificial earth-works.

Conclusions thus drawn, when established, rest upon a very firm basis. They depend upon the number and appositeness of the facts, and it would be very interesting to pursue this branch of evidence in detail. In following up this idea, the names to be sought for might thus be classed:—

I. Names of the great features, involving proper names and actions.

Cadair Idris and Cadair Arthur both involve more than a mere name. Idris and Arthur must have been invested with heroic qualifications to have been placed in such “seats.”

II. Names of lesser features, as “Bryn y Saeth,” Hill of the Dart; “Llyn Llyngclys,” Lake of the Engulphed Court; “Ceven y Bedd,” the Ridge of the Grave; “Rhyd y Saeson,” the Saxons’ Ford.

III. Names of mixed natural and artificial objects, as “Coeten Arthur,” Arthur’s Coit; “Cerrig y Drudion,” the Crag of the Heroes; which involve actions. And such as embody proper names only, as “Cerrig Howell,” the Crag of Howell; “Caer Arianrod,” the Camp of Arianrod; “Bron Goronwy,”

the Breast (of the Hill) of Goronwy; “Castell mab Wynion,” the Castle of the son of Wynion; “Nant Gwrtheyrn,” the Rill of Vortigern.

The selection of names would demand much care and discretion. The translations should be indisputable, and, where known, the connexion of a name with a legend should be noted. Such a name as “Mochdrev,” Swine-town, would be valueless unless accompanied by a legend.

It is always valuable to find a place or work called after an individual, because it may help to support some tradition of his existence or his actions. But it is requisite that care be taken not to push the etymological dissection too far. Thus, “Caer Arianrod” should be taken simply as the “Camp of Arianrod,” and not rendered the “Camp of the silver circle,” because the latter, though it might possibly have something to do with the reason for which the name was borne by Arianrod herself, had clearly no reference to its application to her camp.

It appears to me, then, looking back upon what has been advanced:—

I. That we have throughout Europe, at an early period, a great body of literature, known as Mediæval Romance, which, amidst much that is wholly of Teutonic origin and character, includes certain well-marked traces of an older Celtic nucleus.

II. Proceeding backwards in time, we find these romances, their ornaments falling away at each step, existing towards the twelfth century, of simpler structure, and with less encumbered Celtic features, in the works of Wace, and other Bards of the Langue d’Oil.

III. We find that Geoffrey of Monmouth, Layamon, and other early British and Anglo-Saxon historians, and minstrels, on the one hand, transmitted to Europe the rudiments of its after romance, much of which, on the other hand, they drew from Wales.

IV. Crossing into Wales we find, in the Mabinogion, the evident counterpart of the Celtic portion of the continental romance, mixed up, indeed, with various reflex additions from beyond the border, but still containing ample internal evidence of a Welsh original.

V. Looking at the connexion between divers of the more ancient Mabinogion, and the topographical nomenclature of part of the country, we

find evidence of the great, though indefinite, antiquity of these tales, and of an origin, which, if not indigenous, is certainly derived from no European nation.

It was with a general belief in some of these conclusions, that I commenced my labours, and I end them with my impressions strongly confirmed. The subject is one not unworthy of the talents of a Llwyd or a Prichard. It might, I think, be shown, by pursuing the inquiry, that the Cymric nation is not only, as Dr. Prichard has proved it to be, an early offshoot of the Indo-European family, and a people of unmixed descent, but that when driven out of their conquests by the later nations, the names and exploits of their heroes, and the compositions of their bards, spread far and wide among the invaders, and affected intimately their tastes and literature for many centuries, and that it has strong claims to be considered the cradle of European Romance.

C. E. G.

*Dowlais, August 29th, 1848.*

## **The Lady of the Fountain**

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King Arthur was at Caerlleon upon Usk; and one day he sat in his chamber; and with him were Owain the son of Urien, and Kynon the son of Clydno, and Kai the son of Kyner; and Gwenhwyvar and her handmaidens at needlework by the window. And if it should be said that there was a porter at Arthur's palace, there was none. Glewlwyd Gavaelvawr was there, acting as porter, to welcome guests and strangers, and to receive them with honour, and to inform them of the manners and customs of the Court; and to direct those who came to the Hall or to the presence-chamber, and those who came to take up their lodging.

In the centre of the chamber King Arthur sat upon a seat of green rushes, over which was spread a covering of flame-coloured satin, and a

cushion of red satin was under his elbow.

Then Arthur spoke, "If I thought you would not disparage me," said he, "I would sleep while I wait for my repast; and you can entertain one another with relating tales, and can obtain a flagon of mead and some meat from Kai." And the King went to sleep. And Kynon the son of Clydno asked Kai for that which Arthur had promised them. "I, too, will have the good tale which he promised to me," said Kai. "Nay," answered Kynon, "fairer will it be for thee to fulfill Arthur's behest, in the first place, and then we will tell thee the best tale that we know." So Kai went to the kitchen and to the mead-cellar, and returned bearing a flagon of mead and a golden goblet, and a handful of skewers, upon which were broiled collops of meat. Then they ate the collops and began to drink the mead. "Now," said Kai, "it is time for you to give me my story." "Kynon," said Owain, "do thou pay to Kai the tale that is his due." "Truly," said Kynon, "thou are older, and art a better teller of tales, and hast seen more marvellous things than I; do thou therefore pay Kai his tale." "Begin thyself," quoth Owain, "with the best that thou knowest." "I will do so," answered Kynon.

"I was the only son of my mother and father, and I was exceedingly aspiring, and my daring was very great. I thought there was no enterprise in the world too mighty for me, and after I had achieved all the adventures that were in my own country, I equipped myself, and set forth to journey through deserts and distant regions. And at length it chanced that I came to the fairest valley in the world, wherein were trees of equal growth; and a river ran through the valley, and a path was by the side of the river. And I followed the path until mid-day, and continued my journey along the remainder of the valley until the evening; and at the extremity of a plain I came to a large and lustrous Castle, at the foot of which was a torrent. And I approached the Castle, and there I beheld two youths with yellow curling hair, each with a frontlet of gold upon his head, and clad in a garment of yellow satin, and they had gold clasps upon their insteps. In the hand of each of them was an ivory bow, strung with the sinews of the stag; and their arrows had shafts of the bone of the whale, and were winged with peacock's feathers; the shafts also had golden heads. And they had daggers with

blades of gold, and with hilts of the bone of the whale. And they were shooting their daggers.

“And a little way from them I saw a man in the prime of life, with his beard newly shorn, clad in a robe and a mantle of yellow satin; and round the top of his mantle was a band of gold lace. On his feet were shoes of variegated leather, fastened by two bosses of gold. When I saw him, I went towards him and saluted him, and such was his courtesy that he no sooner received my greeting than he returned it. And he went with me towards the Castle. Now there were no dwellers in the Castle except those who were in one hall. And there I saw four-and-twenty damsels, embroidering satin at a window. And this I tell thee, Kai, that the least fair of them was fairer than the fairest maid thou hast ever beheld in the Island of Britain, and the least lovely of them was more lovely than Gwenhwyvar, the wife of Arthur, when she has appeared loveliest at the Offering, on the day of the Nativity, or at the feast of Easter. They rose up at my coming, and six of them took my horse, and divested me of my armour; and six others took my arms, and washed them in a vessel until they were perfectly bright. And the third six spread cloths upon the tables and prepared meat. And the fourth six took off my soiled garments, and placed others upon me; namely, an under-vest and a doublet of fine linen, and a robe, and a surcoat, and a mantle of yellow satin with a broad gold band upon the mantle. And they placed cushions both beneath and around me, with coverings of red linen; and I sat down. Now the six maidens who had taken my horse, unharnessed him, as well as if they had been the best squires in the Island of Britain. Then, behold, they brought bowls of silver wherein was water to wash, and towels of linen, some green and some white; and I washed. And in a little while the man sat down to the table. And I sat next to him, and below me sat all the maidens, except those who waited on us. And the table was of silver, and the cloths upon the table were of linen; and no vessel was served upon the table that was not either of gold or of silver, or of buffalo-horn. And our meat was brought to us. And verily, Kai, I saw there every sort of meat and every sort of liquor that I have ever seen elsewhere; but the meat and the liquor were better served there than I have ever seen them in any other place.

“Until the repast was half over, neither the man nor any one of the damsels spoke a single word to me; but when the man perceived that it would be more agreeable to me to converse than to eat any more, he began to inquire of me who I was. I said I was glad to find that there was some one who would discourse with me, and that it was not considered so great a crime at that Court for people to hold converse together. ‘Chieftain,’ said the man, ‘we would have talked to thee sooner, but we feared to disturb thee during thy repast; now, however, we will discourse.’ Then I told the man who I was, and what was the cause of my journey; and said that I was seeking whether any one was superior to me, or whether I could gain the mastery over all. The man looked upon me, and he smiled and said, ‘If I did not fear to distress thee too much, I would show thee that which thou seekest.’ Upon this I became anxious and sorrowful, and when the man perceived it, he said, ‘If thou wouldest rather that I should show thee thy disadvantage than thine advantage, I will do so. Sleep here to-night, and in the morning arise early, and take the road upwards through the valley until thou reachest the wood through which thou camest hither. A little way within the wood thou wilt meet with a road branching off to the right, by which thou must proceed, until thou comest to a large sheltered glade with a mound in the centre. And thou wilt see a black man of great stature on the top of the mound. He is not smaller in size than two of the men of this world. He has but one foot; and one eye in the middle of his forehead. And he has a club of iron, and it is certain that there are no two men in the world who would not find their burden in that club. And he is not a comely man, but on the contrary he is exceedingly ill-favoured; and he is the woodward of that wood. And thou wilt see a thousand wild animals grazing around him. Inquire of him the way out of the glade, and he will reply to thee briefly, and will point out the road by which thou shalt find that which thou art in quest of.’

“And long seemed that night to me. And the next morning I arose and equipped myself, and mounted my horse, and proceeded straight through the valley to the wood; and I followed the cross-road which the man had pointed out to me, till at length I arrived at the glade. And there was I three

times more astonished at the number of wild animals that I beheld, than the man had said I should be. And the black man was there, sitting upon the top of the mound. Huge of stature as the man had told me that he was, I found him to exceed by far the description he had given me of him. As for the iron club which the man had told me was a burden for two men, I am certain, Kai, that it would be a heavy weight for four warriors to lift; and this was in the black man's hand. And he only spoke to me in answer to my questions. Then I asked him what power he held over those animals. 'I will show thee, little man,' said he. And he took his club in his hand, and with it he struck a stag a great blow so that he brayed vehemently, and at his braying the animals came together, as numerous as the stars in the sky, so that it was difficult for me to find room in the glade to stand among them. There were serpents, and dragons, and divers sorts of animals. And he looked at them, and bade them go and feed; and they bowed their heads, and did him homage as vassals to their lord.

"Then the black man said to me, 'Seest thou now, little man, what power I hold over these animals?' Then I inquired of him the way, and he became very rough in his manner to me; however, he asked me whither I would go? And when I told him who I was and what I sought, he directed me. 'Take,' said he, 'that path that leads towards the head of the glade, and ascend the wooded steep until thou comest to its summit; and there thou wilt find an open space like to a large valley, and in the midst of it a tall tree, whose branches are greener than the greenest pine-trees. Under this tree is a fountain, and by the side of the fountain a marble slab, and on the marble slab a silver bowl, attached by a chain of silver, so that it may not be carried away. Take the bowl and throw a bowlful of water upon the slab, and thou wilt hear a mighty peal of thunder, so that thou wilt think that heaven and earth are trembling with its fury. With the thunder there will come a shower so severe that it will be scarce possible for thee to endure it and live. And the shower will be of hailstones; and after the shower, the weather will become fair, but every leaf that was upon the tree will have been carried away by the shower. Then a flight of birds will come and alight upon the tree; and in thine own country thou didst never hear a strain so



sweet as that which they will sing. And at the moment thou art most delighted with the song of the birds, thou wilt hear a murmuring and complaining coming towards thee along the valley. And thou wilt see a knight upon a coal-black horse, clothed in black velvet, and with a pennon of black linen upon his lance; and he will ride unto thee to encounter thee with the utmost speed. If thou fleest from him he will overtake thee, and if thou abidest there, as sure as thou art a mounted knight, he will leave thee on foot. And if thou dost not find trouble in that adventure, thou needest not seek it during the rest of thy life.'

"So I journeyed on, until I reached the summit of the steep, and there I found everything as the black man had described it to me. And I went up to the tree, and beneath it I saw the fountain, and by its side the marble slab, and the silver bowl fastened by the chain. Then I took the bowl, and cast a bowlful of water upon the slab; and thereupon, behold, the thunder came, much more violent than the black man had led me to expect; and after the thunder came the shower; and of a truth I tell thee, Kai, that there is neither man nor beast that can endure that shower and live. For not one of those hailstones would be stopped, either by the flesh or by the skin, until it had reached the bone. I turned my horse's flank towards the shower, and placed the beak of my shield over his head and neck, while I held the upper part of it over my own head. And thus I withstood the shower. When I looked on the tree there was not a single leaf upon it, and then the sky became clear, and with that, behold the birds lighted upon the tree, and sang. And truly, Kai, I never heard any melody equal to that, either before or since. And when I was most charmed with listening to the birds, lo, a murmuring voice was heard through the valley, approaching me and saying, 'Oh, Knight, what has brought thee hither? What evil have I done to thee, that thou shouldst act towards me and my possessions as thou hast this day? Dost thou not know that the shower to-day has left in my dominions neither man nor beast alive that was exposed to it?' And thereupon, behold, a Knight on a black horse appeared, clothed in jet-black velvet, and with a tabard of black linen about him. And we charged each other, and, as the onset was furious, it was not long before I was overthrown. Then the Knight passed

the shaft of his lance through the bridle rein of my horse, and rode off with the two horses, leaving me where I was. And he did not even bestow so much notice upon me as to imprison me, nor did he despoil me of my arms. So I returned along the road by which I had come. And when I reached the glade where the black man was, I confess to thee, Kai, it is a marvel that I did not melt down into a liquid pool, through the shame that I felt at the black man's derision. And that night I came to the same castle where I had spent the night preceding. And I was more agreeably entertained that night than I had been the night before; and I was better feasted, and I conversed freely with the inmates of the castle, and none of them alluded to my expedition to the fountain, neither did I mention it to any; and I remained there that night. When I arose on the morrow, I found, ready saddled, a dark bay palfrey, with nostrils as red as scarlet; and after putting on my armour, and leaving there my blessing, I returned to my own Court. And that horse I still possess, and he is in the stable yonder. And I declare that I would not part with him for the best palfrey in the Island of Britain.

"Now of a truth, Kai, no man ever before confessed to an adventure so much to his own discredit, and verily it seems strange to me, that neither before nor since have I heard of any person besides myself who knew of this adventure, and that the subject of it should exist within King Arthur's dominions, without any other person lighting upon it."

"Now," quoth Owain, "would it not be well to go and endeavour to discover that place?"

"By the hand of my friend," said Kai, "often dost thou utter that with thy tongue which thou wouldst not make good with thy deeds."

"In very truth," said Gwenhwyvar, "it were better thou wert hanged, Kai, than to use such uncourteous speech towards a man like Owain."

"By the hand of my friend, good Lady," said Kai, "thy praise of Owain is not greater than mine."

With that Arthur awoke, and asked if he had not been sleeping a little.

"Yes, Lord," answered Owain, "thou hast slept awhile."

"Is it time for us to go to meat?"

"It is, Lord," said Owain.

Then the horn for washing was sounded, and the King and all his household sat down to eat. And when the meal was ended, Owain withdrew to his lodging, and made ready his horse and his arms.

On the morrow, with the dawn of day, he put on his armour, and mounted his charger, and travelled through distant lands and over desert mountains. And at length he arrived at the valley which Kynon had described to him; and he was certain that it was the same that he sought. And journeying along the valley by the side of the river, he followed its course till he came to the plain and within sight of the Castle. When he approached the Castle, he saw the youths shooting their daggers in the place where Kynon had seen them, and the yellow man, to whom the Castle belonged, standing hard by. And no sooner had Owain saluted the yellow man than he was saluted by him in return.

And he went forward towards the Castle, and there he saw the chamber, and when he had entered the chamber he beheld the maidens working at satin embroidery, in chairs of gold. And their beauty and their comeliness seemed to Owain far greater than Kynon had represented to him. And they rose to wait upon Owain, as they had done to Kynon, and the meal which they set before him gave more satisfaction to Owain than it had done to Kynon.

About the middle of the repast, the yellow man asked Owain the object of his journey. And Owain made it known to him, and said, "I am in quest of the Knight who guards the fountain." Upon this the yellow man smiled, and said that he was as loth to point out that adventure to Owain as he had been to Kynon. However, he described the whole to Owain, and they retired to rest.

The next morning Owain found his horse made ready for him by the damsels, and he set forward and came to the glade where the black man was. And the stature of the black man seemed more wonderful to Owain than it had done to Kynon, and Owain asked of him his road, and he showed it to him. And Owain followed the road, as Kynon had done, till he came to the green tree; and he beheld the fountain, and the slab beside the fountain, with the bowl upon it. And Owain took the bowl, and threw a

bowlful of water upon the slab. And, lo, the thunder was heard, and after the thunder came the shower, much more violent than Kynon had described, and after the shower the sky became bright. And when Owain looked at the tree, there was not one leaf upon it. And immediately the birds came, and settled upon the tree, and sang. And when their song was most pleasing to Owain, he beheld a Knight coming towards him through the valley, and he prepared to receive him; and encountered him violently. Having broken both their lances, they drew their swords, and fought blade to blade. Then Owain struck the Knight a blow through his helmet, head-piece and visor, and through the skin, and the flesh, and the bone, until it wounded the very brain. Then the black Knight felt that he had received a mortal wound, upon which he turned his horse's head, and fled. And Owain pursued him, and followed close upon him, although he was not near enough to strike him with his sword. Thereupon Owain descried a vast and resplendent Castle. And they came to the Castle gate. And the black Knight was allowed to enter, and the portcullis was let fall upon Owain; and it struck his horse behind the saddle, and cut him in two, and carried away the rowels of the spurs that were upon Owain's heels. And the portcullis descended to the floor. And the rowels of the spurs and part of the horse were without, and Owain with the other part of the horse remained between the two gates, and the inner gate was closed, so that Owain could not go thence; and Owain was in a perplexing situation. And while he was in this state, he could see through an aperture in the gate, a street facing him, with a row of houses on each side. And he beheld a maiden, with yellow curling hair, and a frontlet of gold upon her head; and she was clad in a dress of yellow satin, and on her feet were shoes of variegated leather. And she approached the gate, and desired that it should be opened. "Heaven knows, Lady," said Owain, "it is no more possible for me to open to thee from hence, than it is for thee to set me free." "Truly," said the damsel, "it is very sad that thou canst not be released, and every woman ought to succour thee, for I never saw one more faithful in the service of ladies than thou. As a friend thou art the most sincere, and as a lover the most devoted. Therefore," quoth she, "whatever is in my power to do for thy release, I will do it. Take this ring and put it on

thy finger, with the stone inside thy hand; and close thy hand upon the stone. And as long as thou concealest it, it will conceal thee. When they have consulted together, they will come forth to fetch thee, in order to put thee to death; and they will be much grieved that they cannot find thee. And I will await thee on the horseblock yonder; and thou wilt be able to see me, though I cannot see thee; therefore come and place thy hand upon my shoulder, that I may know that thou art near me. And by the way that I go hence, do thou accompany me.”

Then she went away from Owain, and he did all that the maiden had told him. And the people of the Castle came to seek Owain, to put him to death, and when they found nothing but the half of his horse, they were sorely grieved.

And Owain vanished from among them, and went to the maiden, and placed his hand upon her shoulder; whereupon she set off, and Owain followed her, until they came to the door of a large and beautiful chamber, and the maiden opened it, and they went in, and closed the door. And Owain looked around the chamber, and behold there was not even a single nail in it that was not painted with gorgeous colours; and there was not a single panel that had not sundry images in gold portrayed upon it.

The maiden kindled a fire, and took water in a silver bowl, and put a towel of white linen on her shoulder, and gave Owain water to wash. Then she placed before him a silver table, inlaid with gold; upon which was a cloth of yellow linen; and she brought him food. And of a truth, Owain had never seen any kind of meat that was not there in abundance, but it was better cooked there than he had ever found it in any other place. Nor did he ever see so excellent a display of meat and drink, as there. And there was not one vessel from which he was served, that was not of gold or of silver. And Owain ate and drank, until late in the afternoon, when lo, they heard a mighty clamour in the Castle; and Owain asked the maiden what that outcry was. “They are administering extreme unction,” said she, “to the Nobleman who owns the Castle.” And Owain went to sleep.

The couch which the maiden had prepared for him was meet for Arthur himself; it was of scarlet, and fur, and satin, and sendal, and fine linen. In

the middle of the night they heard a woful outcry. "What outcry again is this?" said Owain. "The Nobleman who owned the Castle is now dead," said the maiden. And a little after daybreak, they heard an exceeding loud clamour and wailing. And Owain asked the maiden what was the cause of it. "They are bearing to the church the body of the Nobleman who owned the Castle."

And Owain rose up, and clothed himself, and opened a window of the chamber, and looked towards the Castle; and he could see neither the bounds, nor the extent of the hosts that filled the streets. And they were fully armed; and a vast number of women were with them, both on horseback and on foot; and all the ecclesiastics in the city, singing. And it seemed to Owain that the sky resounded with the vehemence of their cries, and with the noise of the trumpets, and with the singing of the ecclesiastics. In the midst of the throng, he beheld the bier, over which was a veil of white linen; and wax tapers were burning beside and around it, and none that supported the bier was lower in rank than a powerful Baron.

Never did Owain see an assemblage so gorgeous with satin, and silk, and sendal. And following the train, he beheld a lady with yellow hair falling over her shoulders, and stained with blood; and about her a dress of yellow satin, which was torn. Upon her feet were shoes of variegated leather. And it was a marvel that the ends of her fingers were not bruised, from the violence with which she smote her hands together. Truly she would have been the fairest lady Owain ever saw, had she been in her usual guise. And her cry was louder than the shout of the men, or the clamour of the trumpets. No sooner had he beheld the lady, than he became inflamed with her love, so that it took entire possession of him.

Then he inquired of the maiden who the lady was. "Heaven knows," replied the maiden, "she may be said to be the fairest, and the most chaste, and the most liberal, and the wisest, and the most noble of women. And she is my mistress; and she is called the Countess of the Fountain, the wife of him whom thou didst slay yesterday." "Verily," said Owain, "she is the woman that I love best." "Verily," said the maiden, "she shall also love thee not a little."

And with that the maid arose, and kindled a fire, and filled a pot with water, and placed it to warm; and she brought a towel of white linen, and placed it around Owain's neck; and she took a goblet of ivory, and a silver basin, and filled them with warm water, wherewith she washed Owain's head. Then she opened a wooden casket, and drew forth a razor, whose haft was of ivory, and upon which were two rivets of gold. And she shaved his beard, and she dried his head, and his throat, with the towel. Then she rose up from before Owain, and brought him to eat. And truly Owain had never so good a meal, nor was he ever so well served.

When he had finished his repast, the maiden arranged his couch. "Come here," said she, "and sleep, and I will go and woo for thee." And Owain went to sleep, and the maiden shut the door of the chamber after her, and went towards the Castle. When she came there, she found nothing but mourning, and sorrow; and the Countess in her chamber could not bear the sight of any one through grief. Luned came and saluted her, but the Countess answered her not. And the maiden bent down towards her, and said, "What aileth thee, that thou answerest no one to-day?" "Luned," said the Countess, "what change hath befallen thee, that thou hast not come to visit me in my grief? It was wrong in thee, and I having made thee rich; it was wrong in thee that thou didst not come to see me in my distress. That was wrong in thee." "Truly," said Luned, "I thought thy good sense was greater than I find it to be. Is it well for thee to mourn after that good man, or for anything else, that thou canst not have?" "I declare to heaven," said the Countess, "that in the whole world there is not a man equal to him." "Not so," said Luned, "for an ugly man would be as good as, or better than he." "I declare to heaven," said the Countess, "that were it not repugnant to me to cause to be put to death one whom I have brought up, I would have thee executed, for making such a comparison to me. As it is, I will banish thee." "I am glad," said Luned, "that thou hast no other cause to do so, than that I would have been of service to thee where thou didst not know what was to thine advantage. And henceforth evil betide whichever of us shall make the first advance towards reconciliation to the other; whether I should

seek an invitation from thee, or thou of thine own accord shouldst send to invite me.”

With that Luned went forth: and the Countess arose and followed her to the door of the chamber, and began coughing loudly. And when Luned looked back, the Countess beckoned to her; and she returned to the Countess. “In truth,” said the Countess, “evil is thy disposition; but if thou knowest what is to my advantage, declare it to me.” “I will do so,” quoth she.

“Thou knowest that except by warfare and arms it is impossible for thee to preserve thy possessions; delay not, therefore, to seek some one who can defend them.” “And how can I do that?” said the Countess. “I will tell thee,” said Luned. “Unless thou canst defend the fountain, thou canst not maintain thy dominions; and no one can defend the fountain, except it be a knight of Arthur’s household; and I will go to Arthur’s Court, and ill betide me, if I return thence without a warrior who can guard the fountain as well as, or even better than, he who defended it formerly.” “That will be hard to perform,” said the Countess. “Go, however, and make proof of that which thou hast promised.”

Luned set out, under the pretence of going to Arthur’s Court; but she went back to the chamber where she had left Owain; and she tarried there with him as long as it might have taken her to have travelled to the Court of King Arthur. And at the end of that time, she apparelled herself and went to visit the Countess. And the Countess was much rejoiced when she saw her, and inquired what news she brought from the Court. “I bring thee the best of news,” said Luned, “for I have compassed the object of my mission. When wilt thou, that I should present to thee the chieftain who has come with me hither?” “Bring him here to visit me to-morrow, at mid-day,” said the Countess, “and I will cause the town to be assembled by that time.”

And Luned returned home. And the next day, at noon, Owain arrayed himself in a coat, and a surcoat, and a mantle of yellow satin, upon which was a broad band of gold lace; and on his feet were high shoes of variegated leather, which were fastened by golden clasps, in the form of lions. And they proceeded to the chamber of the Countess.



Right glad was the Countess of their coming, and she gazed steadfastly upon Owain, and said, "Luned, this knight has not the look of a traveller." "What harm is there in that, lady?" said Luned. "I am certain," said the Countess, "that no other man than this chased the soul from the body of my lord." "So much the better for thee, lady," said Luned, "for had he not been stronger than thy lord he could not have deprived him of life. There is no remedy for that which is past, be it as it may." "Go back to thine abode," said the Countess, "and I will take counsel."

The next day the Countess caused all her subjects to assemble, and showed them that her earldom was left defenceless, and that it could not be protected but with horse and arms, and military skill. "Therefore," said she, "this is what I offer for your choice: either let one of you take me, or give your consent for me to take a husband from elsewhere to defend my dominions."

So they came to the determination that it was better that she should have permission to marry some one from elsewhere; and, thereupon, she sent for the bishops and archbishops to celebrate her nuptials with Owain. And the men of the earldom did Owain homage.

And Owain defended the Fountain with lance and sword. And this is the manner in which he defended it: Whensoever a knight came there he overthrew him, and sold him for his full worth, and what he thus gained he divided among his barons and his knights; and no man in the whole world could be more beloved than he was by his subjects. And it was thus for the space of three years.

It befell that as Gwalchmai went forth one day with King Arthur, he perceived him to be very sad and sorrowful. And Gwalchmai was much grieved to see Arthur in this state; and he questioned him, saying, "Oh, my lord! what has befallen thee?" "In sooth, Gwalchmai," said Arthur, "I am grieved concerning Owain, whom I have lost these three years, and I shall certainly die if the fourth year passes without my seeing him. Now I am sure, that it is through the tale which Kynon the son of Clydno related, that I have lost Owain." "There is no need for thee," said Gwalchmai, "to summon to arms thy whole dominions on this account, for thou thyself and

the men of thy household will be able to avenge Owain, if he be slain; or to set him free, if he be in prison; and, if alive, to bring him back with thee.” And it was settled according to what Gwalchmai had said.

Then Arthur and the men of his household prepared to go and seek Owain, and their number was three thousand, besides their attendants. And Kynon the son of Clydno acted as their guide. And Arthur came to the Castle where Kynon had been before, and when he came there the youths were shooting in the same place, and the yellow man was standing hard by. When the yellow man saw Arthur he greeted him, and invited him to the Castle; and Arthur accepted his invitation, and they entered the Castle together. And great as was the number of his retinue, their presence was scarcely observed in the Castle, so vast was its extent. And the maidens rose up to wait on them, and the service of the maidens appeared to them all to excel any attendance they had ever met with; and even the pages who had charge of the horses were no worse served, that night, than Arthur himself would have been in his own palace.

The next morning Arthur set out thence, with Kynon for his guide, and came to the place where the black man was. And the stature of the black man was more surprising to Arthur than it had been represented to him. And they came to the top of the wooded steep, and traversed the valley till they reached the green tree, where they saw the fountain, and the bowl, and the slab. And upon that, Kai came to Arthur and spoke to him. “My lord,” said he, “I know the meaning of all this, and my request is, that thou wilt permit me to throw the water on the slab, and to receive the first adventure that may befall.” And Arthur gave him leave.

Then Kai threw a bowlful of water upon the slab, and immediately there came the thunder, and after the thunder the shower. And such a thunderstorm they had never known before, and many of the attendants who were in Arthur’s train were killed by the shower. After the shower had ceased the sky became clear; and on looking at the tree they beheld it completely leafless. Then the birds descended upon the tree, and the song of the birds was far sweeter than any strain they had ever heard before. Then they beheld a knight on a coal-black horse, clothed in black satin, coming

rapidly towards them. And Kai met him and encountered him, and it was not long before Kai was overthrown. And the knight withdrew, and Arthur and his host encamped for the night.

And when they arose in the morning, they perceived the signal of combat upon the lance of the Knight. And Kai came to Arthur, and spoke to him: "My lord," said he, "though I was overthrown yesterday, if it seem good to thee, I would gladly meet the Knight again to-day." "Thou mayst do so," said Arthur. And Kai went towards the Knight. And on the spot he overthrew Kai, and struck him with the head of his lance in the forehead, so that it broke his helmet and the head-piece, and pierced the skin and the flesh, the breadth of the spear-head, even to the bone. And Kai returned to his companions.

After this, all the household of Arthur went forth, one after the other, to combat the Knight, until there was not one that was not overthrown by him, except Arthur and Gwalchmai. And Arthur armed himself to encounter the Knight. "Oh, my lord," said Gwalchmai, "permit me to fight with him first." And Arthur permitted him. And he went forth to meet the Knight, having over himself and his horse a satin robe of honour which had been sent him by the daughter of the Earl of Rhangyw, and in this dress he was not known by any of the host. And they charged each other, and fought all that day until the evening, and neither of them was able to unhorse the other.

The next day they fought with strong lances, and neither of them could obtain the mastery.

And the third day they fought with exceeding strong lances. And they were incensed with rage, and fought furiously, even until noon. And they gave each other such a shock that the girths of their horses were broken, so that they fell over their horses' cruppers to the ground. And they rose up speedily, and drew their swords, and resumed the combat; and the multitude that witnessed their encounter felt assured that they had never before seen two men so valiant or so powerful. And had it been midnight, it would have been light from the fire that flashed from their weapons. And the Knight gave Gwalchmai a blow that turned his helmet from off his face, so that the

Knight knew that it was Gwalchmai. Then Owain said, "My lord Gwalchmai, I did not know thee for my cousin, owing to the robe of honour that enveloped thee; take my sword and my arms." Said Gwalchmai, "Thou, Owain, art the victor; take thou my sword." And with that Arthur saw that they were conversing, and advanced towards them. "My lord Arthur," said Gwalchmai, "here is Owain, who has vanquished me, and will not take my arms." "My lord," said Owain, "it is he that has vanquished me, and he will not take my sword." "Give me your swords," said Arthur, "and then neither of you has vanquished the other." Then Owain put his arms around Arthur's neck, and they embraced. And all the host hurried forward to see Owain, and to embrace him; and there was nigh being a loss of life, so great was the press.

And they retired that night, and the next day Arthur prepared to depart. "My lord," said Owain, "this is not well of thee; for I have been absent from thee these three years, and during all that time, up to this very day, I have been preparing a banquet for thee, knowing that thou wouldst come to seek me. Tarry with me, therefore, until thou and thy attendants have recovered the fatigues of the journey, and have been anointed."

And they all proceeded to the Castle of the Countess of the Fountain, and the banquet which had been three years preparing was consumed in three months. Never had they a more delicious or agreeable banquet. And Arthur prepared to depart. Then he sent an embassy to the Countess, to beseech her to permit Owain to go with him for the space of three months, that he might show him to the nobles and the fair dames of the Island of Britain. And the Countess gave her consent, although it was very painful to her. So Owain came with Arthur to the Island of Britain. And when he was once more amongst his kindred and friends, he remained three years, instead of three months, with them.

And as Owain one day sat at meat, in the city of Caerlleon upon Usk, behold a damsel entered upon a bay horse, with a curling mane and covered with foam, and the bridle and so much as was seen of the saddle were of gold. And the damsel was arrayed in a dress of yellow satin. And she came up to Owain, and took the ring from off his hand. "Thus," said she, "shall

be treated the deceiver, the traitor, the faithless, the disgraced, and the beardless.” And she turned her horse’s head and departed.

Then his adventure came to Owain’s remembrance, and he was sorrowful; and having finished eating he went to his own abode and made preparations that night. And the next day he arose but did not go to the Court, but wandered to the distant parts of the earth and to uncultivated mountains. And he remained there until all his apparel was worn out, and his body was wasted away, and his hair was grown long. And he went about with the wild beasts and fed with them, until they became familiar with him; but at length he grew so weak that he could no longer bear them company. Then he descended from the mountains to the valley, and came to a park that was the fairest in the world, and belonged to a widowed Countess.

One day the Countess and her maidens went forth to walk by a lake, that was in the middle of the park. And they saw the form of a man. And they were terrified. Nevertheless they went near him, and touched him, and looked at him. And they saw that there was life in him, though he was exhausted by the heat of the sun. And the Countess returned to the Castle, and took a flask full of precious ointment, and gave it to one of her maidens. “Go with this,” said she, “and take with thee yonder horse and clothing, and place them near the man we saw just now. And anoint him with this balsam, near his heart; and if there is life in him, he will arise through the efficacy of this balsam. Then watch what he will do.”

And the maiden departed from her, and poured the whole of the balsam upon Owain, and left the horse and the garments hard by, and went a little way off, and hid herself to watch him. In a short time she saw him begin to move his arms; and he rose up, and looked at his person, and became ashamed of the unseemliness of his appearance. Then he perceived the horse and the garments that were near him. And he crept forward till he was able to draw the garments to him from off the saddle. And he clothed himself, and with difficulty mounted the horse. Then the damsel discovered herself to him, and saluted him. And he was rejoiced when he saw her, and inquired of her, what land and what territory that was. “Truly,” said the

maiden, "a widowed Countess owns yonder Castle; at the death of her husband, he left her two Earldoms, but at this day she has but this one dwelling that has not been wrested from her by a young Earl, who is her neighbour, because she refused to become his wife." "That is pity," said Owain. And he and the maiden proceeded to the Castle; and he alighted there, and the maiden conducted him to a pleasant chamber, and kindled a fire and left him.

And the maiden came to the Countess, and gave the flask into her hand. "Ha! maiden," said the Countess, "where is all the balsam?" "Have I not used it all?" said she. "Oh, maiden," said the Countess, "I cannot easily forgive thee this; it is sad for me to have wasted seven-score pounds' worth of precious ointment upon a stranger whom I know not. However, maiden, wait thou upon him, until he is quite recovered."

And the maiden did so, and furnished him with meat and drink, and fire, and lodging, and medicaments, until he was well again. And in three months he was restored to his former guise, and became even more comely than he had ever been before.

One day Owain heard a great tumult, and a sound of arms in the Castle, and he inquired of the maiden the cause thereof. "The Earl," said she, "whom I mentioned to thee, has come before the Castle, with a numerous army, to subdue the Countess." And Owain inquired of her whether the Countess had a horse and arms in her possession. "She has the best in the world," said the maiden. "Wilt thou go and request the loan of a horse and arms for me," said Owain, "that I may go and look at this army?" "I will," said the maiden.

And she came to the Countess, and told her what Owain had said. And the Countess laughed. "Truly," said she, "I will even give him a horse and arms for ever; such a horse and such arms had he never yet, and I am glad that they should be taken by him to-day, lest my enemies should have them against my will to-morrow. Yet I know not what he would do with them."

The Countess bade them bring out a beautiful black steed, upon which was a beechen saddle, and a suit of armour, for man and horse. And Owain armed himself, and mounted the horse, and went forth, attended by two

pages completely equipped, with horses and arms. And when they came near to the Earl's army, they could see neither its extent nor its extremity. And Owain asked the pages in which troop the Earl was. "In yonder troop," said they, "in which are four yellow standards. Two of them are before, and two behind him." "Now," said Owain, "do you return and await me near the portal of the Castle." So they returned, and Owain pressed forward until he met the Earl. And Owain drew him completely out of his saddle, and turned his horse's head towards the Castle, and though it was with difficulty, he brought the Earl to the portal, where the pages awaited him. And in they came. And Owain presented the Earl as a gift to the Countess. And said to her, "Behold a requital to thee for thy blessed balsam."

The army encamped around the Castle. And the Earl restored to the Countess the two Earldoms he had taken from her, as a ransom for his life; and for his freedom he gave her the half of his own dominions, and all his gold, and his silver, and his jewels, besides hostages.

And Owain took his departure. And the Countess and all her subjects besought him to remain, but Owain chose rather to wander through distant lands and deserts.

And as he journeyed, he heard a loud yelling in a wood. And it was repeated a second and a third time. And Owain went towards the spot, and beheld a huge craggy mound, in the middle of the wood; on the side of which was a grey rock. And there was a cleft in the rock, and a serpent was within the cleft. And near the rock stood a black lion, and every time the lion sought to go thence, the serpent darted towards him to attack him. And Owain unsheathed his sword, and drew near to the rock; and as the serpent sprang out, he struck him with his sword, and cut him in two. And he dried his sword, and went on his way, as before. But behold the lion followed him, and played about him, as though it had been a greyhound that he had reared.

They proceeded thus throughout the day, until the evening. And when it was time for Owain to take his rest, he dismounted, and turned his horse loose in a flat and wooded meadow. And he struck fire, and when the fire was kindled, the lion brought him fuel enough to last for three nights. And

the lion disappeared. And presently the lion returned, bearing a fine large roebuck. And he threw it down before Owain, who went towards the fire with it.

And Owain took the roebuck, and skinned it, and placed collops of its flesh upon skewers, around the fire. The rest of the buck he gave to the lion to devour. While he was doing this, he heard a deep sigh near him, and a second, and a third. And Owain called out to know whether the sigh he heard proceeded from a mortal; and he received answer that it did. "Who art thou?" said Owain. "Truly," said the voice, "I am Luned, the handmaiden of the Countess of the Fountain." "And what dost thou here?" said Owain. "I am imprisoned," said she, "on account of the knight who came from Arthur's Court, and married the Countess. And he stayed a short time with her, but he afterwards departed for the Court of Arthur, and has not returned since. And he was the friend I loved best in the world. And two of the pages in the Countess's chamber traduced him, and called him a deceiver. And I told them that they two were not a match for him alone. So they imprisoned me in the stone vault, and said that I should be put to death, unless he came himself to deliver me, by a certain day; and that is no further off than the day after to-morrow. And I have no one to send to seek him for me. And his name is Owain the son of Urien." "And art thou certain that if that knight knew all this, he would come to thy rescue?" "I am most certain of it," said she.

When the collops were cooked, Owain divided them into two parts, between himself and the maiden; and after they had eaten, they talked together, until the day dawned. And the next morning Owain inquired of the damsel, if there was any place where he could get food and entertainment for that night. "There is, Lord," said she; "cross over yonder, and go along the side of the river, and in a short time thou wilt see a great Castle, in which are many towers, and the Earl who owns that Castle is the most hospitable man in the world. There thou mayst spend the night."

Never did sentinel keep stricter watch over his lord, than the lion that night over Owain.



And Owain accoutred his horse, and passed across by the ford, and came in sight of the Castle. And he entered it, and was honourably received. And his horse was well cared for, and plenty of fodder was placed before him. Then the lion went and lay down in the horse's manger; so that none of the people of the Castle dared to approach him. The treatment which Owain met with there was such as he had never known elsewhere, for every one was as sorrowful as though death had been upon him. And they went to meat; and the Earl sat upon one side of Owain, and on the other side his only daughter. And Owain had never seen any more lovely than she. Then the lion came and placed himself between Owain's feet, and he fed him with every kind of food that he took himself. And he never saw anything equal to the sadness of the people.

In the middle of the repast the Earl began to bid Owain welcome. "Then," said Owain, "behold, it is time for thee to be cheerful." "Heaven knows," said the Earl, "that it is not thy coming that makes us sorrowful, but we have cause enough for sadness and care." "What is that?" said Owain. "I have two sons," replied the Earl, "and yesterday they went to the mountains to hunt. Now there is on the mountain a monster who kills men and devours them, and he seized my sons; and to-morrow is the time he has fixed to be here, and he threatens that he will then slay my sons before my eyes, unless I will deliver into his hands this my daughter. He has the form of a man, but in stature he is no less than a giant."

"Truly," said Owain, "that is lamentable. And which wilt thou do?" "Heaven knows," said the Earl, "it will be better that my sons should be slain against my will, than that I should voluntarily give up my daughter to him to ill-treat and destroy." Then they talked about other things, and Owain stayed there that night.

The next morning they heard an exceeding great clamour, which was caused by the coming of the giant with the two youths. And the Earl was anxious both to protect his Castle and to release his two sons. Then Owain put on his armour and went forth to encounter the giant, and the lion followed him. And when the giant saw that Owain was armed, he rushed towards him and attacked him. And the lion fought with the giant much

more fiercely than Owain did. "Truly," said the giant, "I should find no difficulty in fighting with thee, were it not for the animal that is with thee." Upon that Owain took the lion back to the Castle and shut the gate upon him, and then he returned to fight the giant, as before. And the lion roared very loud, for he heard that it went hard with Owain. And he climbed up till he reached the top of the Earl's hall, and thence he got to the top of the Castle, and he sprang down from the walls and went and joined Owain. And the lion gave the giant a stroke with his paw, which tore him from his shoulder to his hip, and his heart was laid bare, and the giant fell down dead. Then Owain restored the two youths to their father.

The Earl besought Owain to remain with him, and he would not, but set forward towards the meadow where Luned was. And when he came there he saw a great fire kindled, and two youths with beautiful curling auburn hair were leading the maiden to cast her into the fire. And Owain asked them what charge they had against her. And they told him of the compact that was between them, as the maiden had done the night before. "And," said they, "Owain has failed her, therefore we are taking her to be burnt." "Truly," said Owain, "he is a good knight, and if he knew that the maiden was in such peril, I marvel that he came not to her rescue; but if you will accept me in his stead, I will do battle with you." "We will," said the youths, "by him who made us."

And they attacked Owain, and he was hard beset by them. And with that the lion came to Owain's assistance, and they two got the better of the young men. And they said to him, "Chieftain, it was not agreed that we should fight save with thyself alone, and it is harder for us to contend with yonder animal than with thee." And Owain put the lion in the place where the maiden had been imprisoned, and blocked up the door with stones, and he went to fight with the young men, as before. But Owain had not his usual strength, and the two youths pressed hard upon him. And the lion roared incessantly at seeing Owain in trouble; and he burst through the wall until he found a way out, and rushed upon the young men, and instantly slew them. So Luned was saved from being burned.

Then Owain returned with Luned to the dominions of the Countess of the Fountain. And when he went thence he took the Countess with him to Arthur's Court, and she was his wife as long as she lived.

And then he took the road that led to the Court of the savage black man, and Owain fought with him, and the lion did not quit Owain until he had vanquished him. And when he reached the Court of the savage black man he entered the hall, and beheld four-and-twenty ladies, the fairest that could be seen. And the garments which they had on were not worth four-and-twenty pence, and they were as sorrowful as death. And Owain asked them the cause of their sadness. And they said, "We are the daughters of Earls, and we all came here with our husbands, whom we dearly loved. And we were received with honour and rejoicing. And we were thrown into a state of stupor, and while we were thus, the demon who owns this Castle slew all our husbands, and took from us our horses, and our raiment, and our gold, and our silver; and the corpses of our husbands are still in this house, and many others with them. And this, Chieftain, is the cause of our grief, and we are sorry that thou art come hither, lest harm should befall thee."

And Owain was grieved when he heard this. And he went forth from the Castle, and he beheld a knight approaching him, who saluted him in a friendly and cheerful manner, as if he had been a brother. And this was the savage black man. "In very sooth," said Owain, "it is not to seek thy friendship that I am here." "In sooth," said he, "thou shalt not find it then." And with that they charged each other, and fought furiously. And Owain overcame him, and bound his hands behind his back. Then the black savage besought Owain to spare his life, and spoke thus: "My lord Owain," said he, "it was foretold that thou shouldst come hither and vanquish me, and thou hast done so. I was a robber here, and my house was a house of spoil; but grant me my life, and I will become the keeper of an Hospice, and I will maintain this house as an Hospice for weak and for strong, as long as I live, for the good of thy soul." And Owain accepted this proposal of him, and remained there that night.

And the next day he took the four-and-twenty ladies, and their horses, and their raiment, and what they possessed of goods and jewels, and

proceeded with them to Arthur's Court. And if Arthur was rejoiced when he saw him, after he had lost him the first time, his joy was now much greater. And of those ladies, such as wished to remain in Arthur's Court remained there, and such as wished to depart departed.

And thenceforward Owain dwelt at Arthur's Court greatly beloved, as the head of his household, until he went away with his followers; and those were the army of three hundred ravens which Kenverchyn had left him. And wherever Owain went with these he was victorious.

And this is the tale of THE LADY OF THE FOUNTAIN.

## **Peredur the Son of Evrawc**

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Earl Evrawc owned the Earldom of the North. And he had seven sons. And Evrawc maintained himself not so much by his own possessions as by attending tournaments, and wars, and combats. And, as it often befalls those who join in encounters and wars, he was slain, and six of his sons likewise. Now the name of his seventh son was Peredur, and he was the youngest of them. And he was not of an age to go to wars and encounters, otherwise he might have been slain as well as his father and brothers. His mother was a scheming and thoughtful woman, and she was very solicitous concerning this her only son and his possessions. So she took counsel with herself to leave the inhabited country, and to flee to the deserts and unfrequented wildernesses. And she permitted none to bear her company thither but women and boys, and spiritless men, who were both unaccustomed and unequal to war and fighting. And none dared to bring either horses or arms where her son was, lest he should set his mind upon them. And the youth went daily to divert himself in the forest, by flinging sticks and staves. And one day he saw his mother's flock of goats, and near the goats two hinds were standing. And he marvelled greatly that these two should be without horns, while the others had them. And he thought they had long run wild, and on that account they had lost their horns. And by activity and swiftness of foot, he drove the hinds and the goats together into the house which there

was for the goats at the extremity of the forest. Then Peredur returned to his mother. "Ah, mother," said he, "a marvellous thing have I seen in the wood; two of thy goats have run wild, and lost their horns, through their having been so long missing in the wood. And no man had ever more trouble than I had to drive them in." Then they all arose and went to see. And when they beheld the hinds they were greatly astonished.

And one day they saw three knights coming along the horse-road on the borders of the forest. And the three knights were Gwalchmai the son of Gwyar, and Geneir Gwystyl, and Owain the son of Urien. And Owain kept on the track of the knight who had divided the apples in Arthur's Court, whom they were in pursuit of. "Mother," said Peredur, "what are those yonder?" "They are angels, my son," said she. "By my faith," said Peredur, "I will go and become an angel with them." And Peredur went to the road, and met them. "Tell me, good soul," said Owain, "sawest thou a knight pass this way, either to-day or yesterday?" "I know not," answered he, "what a knight is." "Such an one as I am," said Owain. "If thou wilt tell me what I ask thee, I will tell thee that which thou askest me." "Gladly will I do so," replied Owain. "What is this?" demanded Peredur, concerning the saddle. "It is a saddle," said Owain. Then he asked about all the accoutrements which he saw upon the men, and the horses, and the arms, and what they were for, and how they were used. And Owain shewed him all these things fully, and told him what use was made of them. "Go forward," said Peredur, "for I saw such an one as thou inquirest for, and I will follow thee."

Then Peredur returned to his mother and her company, and he said to her, "Mother, those were not angels, but honourable knights." Then his mother swooned away. And Peredur went to the place where they kept the horses that carried firewood, and that brought meat and drink from the inhabited country to the desert. And he took a bony piebald horse, which seemed to him the strongest of them. And he pressed a pack into the form of a saddle, and with twisted twigs he imitated the trappings which he had seen upon the horses. And when Peredur came again to his mother, the Countess had recovered from her swoon. "My son," said she, "desirest thou to ride forth?" "Yes, with thy leave," said he. "Wait, then, that I may

counsel thee before thou goest.” “Willingly,” he answered; “speak quickly.” “Go forward, then,” she said, “to the Court of Arthur, where there are the best, and the boldest, and the most bountiful of men. And wherever thou seest a church, repeat there thy Paternoster unto it. And if thou see meat and drink, and have need of them, and none have the kindness or the courtesy to give them to thee, take them thyself. If thou hear an outcry, proceed towards it, especially if it be the outcry of a woman. If thou see a fair jewel, possess thyself of it, and give it to another, for thus thou shalt obtain praise. If thou see a fair woman, pay thy court to her, whether she will or no; for thus thou wilt render thyself a better and more esteemed man than thou wast before.”

After this discourse, Peredur mounted the horse, and taking a handful of sharp-pointed forks in his hand, he rode forth. And he journeyed two days and two nights in the woody wildernesses, and in desert places, without food and without drink. And then he came to a vast wild wood, and far within the wood he saw a fair even glade, and in the glade he saw a tent, and the tent seeming to him to be a church, he repeated his Paternoster to it. And he went towards it, and the door of the tent was open. And a golden chair was near the door. And on the chair sat a lovely auburn-haired maiden, with a golden frontlet on her forehead, and sparkling stones in the frontlet, and with a large gold ring on her hand. And Peredur dismounted, and entered the tent. And the maiden was glad at his coming, and bade him welcome. At the entrance of the tent he saw food, and two flasks full of wine, and two loaves of fine wheaten flour, and collops of the flesh of the wild boar. “My mother told me,” said Peredur, “wheresoever I saw meat and drink, to take it.” “Take the meat and welcome, chieftain,” said she. So Peredur took half of the meat and of the liquor himself, and left the rest to the maiden. And when Peredur had finished eating, he bent upon his knee before the maiden. “My mother,” said he, “told me, wheresoever I saw a fair jewel, to take it.” “Do so, my soul,” said she. So Peredur took the ring. And he mounted his horse, and proceeded on his journey.

After this, behold the knight came to whom the tent belonged; and he was the Lord of the Glade. And he saw the track of the horse, and he said to the maiden, “Tell me who has been here since I departed.” “A man,” said

she, “of wonderful demeanour.” And she described to him what Peredur’s appearance and conduct had been. “Tell me,” said he, “did he offer thee any wrong?” “No,” answered the maiden, “by my faith, he harmed me not.” “By my faith, I do not believe thee; and until I can meet with him, and revenge the insult he has done me, and wreak my vengeance upon him, thou shalt not remain two nights in the same house.” And the knight arose, and set forth to seek Peredur.

Meanwhile Peredur journeyed on towards Arthur’s Court. And before he reached it, another knight had been there, who gave a ring of thick gold at the door of the gate for holding his horse, and went into the Hall where Arthur and his household, and Gwenhwyvar and her maidens, were assembled. And the page of the chamber was serving Gwenhwyvar with a golden goblet. Then the knight dashed the liquor that was therein upon her face, and upon her stomacher, and gave her a violent blow on the face, and said, “If any have the boldness to dispute this goblet with me, and to revenge the insult to Gwenhwyvar, let him follow me to the meadow, and there I will await him.” So the knight took his horse, and rode to the meadow. And all the household hung down their heads, lest any of them should be requested to go and avenge the insult to Gwenhwyvar. For it seemed to them, that no one would have ventured on so daring an outrage, unless he possessed such powers, through magic or charms, that none could be able to take vengeance upon him. Then, behold, Peredur entered the Hall, upon the bony piebald horse, with the uncouth trappings upon it; and in this way he traversed the whole length of the Hall. In the centre of the Hall stood Kai. “Tell me, tall man,” said Peredur, “is that Arthur yonder?” “What wouldest thou with Arthur?” asked Kai. “My mother told me to go to Arthur, and receive the honour of knighthood.” “By my faith,” said he, “thou art all too meanly equipped with horse and with arms.” Thereupon he was perceived by all the household, and they threw sticks at him. Then, behold, a dwarf came forward. He had already been a year at Arthur’s Court, both he and a female dwarf. They had craved harbourage of Arthur, and had obtained it; and during the whole year, neither of them had spoken a single word to any one. When the dwarf beheld Peredur, “Haha!” said he,

“the welcome of Heaven be unto thee, goodly Peredur, son of Evrawc, the chief of warriors, and flower of knighthood.” “Truly,” said Kai, “thou art ill-taught to remain a year mute at Arthur’s Court, with choice of society; and now, before the face of Arthur and all his household, to call out, and declare such a man as this the chief of warriors, and the flower of knighthood.” And he gave him such a box on the ear that he fell senseless to the ground. Then exclaimed the female dwarf, “Haha! goodly Peredur, son of Evrawc; the welcome of Heaven be unto thee, flower of knights, and light of chivalry.” “Of a truth, maiden,” said Kai, “thou art ill-bred to remain mute for a year at the Court of Arthur, and then to speak as thou dost of such a man as this.” And Kai kicked her with his foot, so that she fell to the ground senseless. “Tall man,” said Peredur, “shew me which is Arthur.” “Hold thy peace,” said Kai, “and go after the knight who went hence to the meadow, and take from him the goblet, and overthrow him, and possess thyself of his horse and arms, and then thou shalt receive the order of knighthood.” “I will do so, tall man,” said Peredur. So he turned his horse’s head towards the meadow. And when he came there, the knight was riding up and down, proud of his strength, and valour, and noble mien. “Tell me,” said the knight, “didst thou see any one coming after me from the Court?” “The tall man that was there,” said he, “desired me to come, and overthrow thee, and to take from thee the goblet, and thy horse and thy armour for myself.” “Silence!” said the knight; “go back to the Court, and tell Arthur, from me, either to come himself, or to send some other to fight with me; and unless he do so quickly, I will not wait for him.” “By my faith,” said Peredur, “choose thou whether it shall be willingly or unwillingly, but I will have the horse, and the arms, and the goblet.” And upon this the knight ran at him furiously, and struck him a violent blow with the shaft of his spear, between the neck and the shoulder. “Haha! lad,” said Peredur, “my mother’s servants were not used to play with me in this wise; therefore, thus will I play with thee.” And thereupon he struck him with a sharp-pointed fork, and it hit him in the eye, and came out at the back of his neck, so that he instantly fell down lifeless.



“Verily,” said Owain the son of Urien to Kai, “thou wert ill-advised, when thou didst send that madman after the knight. For one of two things must befall him. He must either be overthrown, or slain. If he is overthrown by the knight, he will be counted by him to be an honourable person of the Court, and an eternal disgrace will it be to Arthur and his warriors. And if he is slain, the disgrace will be the same, and moreover, his sin will be upon him; therefore will I go to see what has befallen him.” So Owain went to the meadow, and he found Peredur dragging the man about. “What art thou doing thus?” said Owain. “This iron coat,” said Peredur, “will never come from off him; not by my efforts, at any rate.” And Owain unfastened his armour and his clothes. “Here, my good soul,” said he, “is a horse and armour better than thine. Take them joyfully, and come with me to Arthur, to receive the order of knighthood, for thou dost merit it.” “May I never shew my face again if I go,” said Peredur; “but take thou the goblet to Gwenhwyvar, and tell Arthur, that wherever I am, I will be his vassal, and will do him what profit and service I am able. And say that I will not come to his Court until I have encountered the tall man that is there, to revenge the injury he did to the dwarf and dwarfess.” And Owain went back to the Court, and related all these things to Arthur and Gwenhwyvar, and to all the household.

And Peredur rode forward. And as he proceeded, behold a knight met him. “Whence comest thou?” said the knight. “I come from Arthur’s Court,” said Peredur. “Art thou one of his men?” asked he. “Yes, by my faith,” he answered. “A good service, truly, is that of Arthur.” “Wherefore sayest thou so?” said Peredur. “I will tell thee,” said he; “I have always been Arthur’s enemy, and all such of his men as I have ever encountered I have slain.” And without further parlance they fought, and it was not long before Peredur brought him to the ground, over his horse’s crupper. Then the knight besought his mercy. “Mercy thou shalt have,” said Peredur, “if thou wilt make oath to me, that thou wilt go to Arthur’s Court, and tell him that it was I that overthrew thee, for the honour of his service; and say, that I will never come to the Court until I have avenged the insult offered to the dwarf and dwarfess.” The knight pledged him his faith of this, and

proceeded to the Court of Arthur, and said as he had promised, and conveyed the threat to Kai.

And Peredur rode forward. And within that week he encountered sixteen knights, and overthrew them all shamefully. And they all went to Arthur's Court, taking with them the same message which the first knight had conveyed from Peredur, and the same threat which he had sent to Kai. And thereupon Kai was reprov'd by Arthur; and Kai was greatly grieved thereat.

And Peredur rode forward. And he came to a vast and desert wood, on the confines of which was a lake. And on the other side was a fair castle. And on the border of the lake he saw a venerable, hoary-headed man, sitting upon a velvet cushion, and having a garment of velvet upon him. And his attendants were fishing in the lake. When the hoary-headed man beheld Peredur approaching, he arose and went towards the castle. And the old man was lame. Peredur rode to the palace, and the door was open, and he entered the hall. And there was the hoary-headed man sitting on a cushion, and a large blazing fire burning before him. And the household and the company arose to meet Peredur, and disarrayed him. And the man asked the youth to sit on the cushion; and they sat down, and conversed together. When it was time, the tables were laid, and they went to meat. And when they had finished their meal, the man inquired of Peredur if he knew well how to fight with the sword. "I know not," said Peredur, "but were I to be taught, doubtless I should." "Whoever can play well with the cudgel and shield, will also be able to fight with a sword." And the man had two sons; the one had yellow hair, and the other auburn. "Arise, youths," said he, "and play with the cudgel and the shield." And so did they. "Tell me, my soul," said the man, "which of the youths thinkest thou plays best." "I think," said Peredur, "that the yellow-haired youth could draw blood from the other, if he chose." "Arise thou, my life, and take the cudgel and the shield from the hand of the youth with the auburn hair, and draw blood from the yellow-haired youth if thou canst." So Peredur arose, and went to play with the yellow-haired youth; and he lifted up his arm, and struck him such a mighty blow, that his brow fell over his eye, and the blood flowed forth. "Ah, my

life,” said the man, “come now, and sit down, for thou wilt become the best fighter with the sword of any in this island; and I am thy uncle, thy mother’s brother. And with me shalt thou remain a space, in order to learn the manners and customs of different countries, and courtesy, and gentleness, and noble bearing. Leave, then, the habits and the discourse of thy mother, and I will be thy teacher; and I will raise thee to the rank of knight from this time forward. And thus do thou. If thou seest aught to cause thee wonder, ask not the meaning of it; if no one has the courtesy to inform thee, the reproach will not fall upon thee, but upon me that am thy teacher.” And they had abundance of honour and service. And when it was time they went to sleep. At the break of day, Peredur arose, and took his horse, and with his uncle’s permission he rode forth. And he came to a vast desert wood, and at the further end of the wood was a meadow, and on the other side of the meadow he saw a large castle. And thitherward Peredur bent his way, and he found the gate open, and he proceeded to the hall. And he beheld a stately hoary-headed man sitting on one side of the hall, and many pages around him, who arose to receive and to honour Peredur. And they placed him by the side of the owner of the palace. Then they discoursed together; and when it was time to eat, they caused Peredur to sit beside the nobleman during the repast. And when they had eaten and drunk as much as they desired, the nobleman asked Peredur whether he could fight with a sword? “Were I to receive instruction,” said Peredur, “I think I could.” Now, there was on the floor of the hall a huge staple, as large as a warrior could grasp. “Take yonder sword,” said the man to Peredur, “and strike the iron staple.” So Peredur arose and struck the staple, so that he cut it in two; and the sword broke into two parts also. “Place the two parts together, and reunite them,” and Peredur placed them together, and they became entire as they were before. And a second time he struck upon the staple, so that both it and the sword broke in two, and as before they reunited. And the third time he gave a like blow, and placed the broken parts together, and neither the staple nor the sword would unite as before. “Youth,” said the nobleman, “come now, and sit down, and my blessing be upon thee. Thou fightest best with the sword of any man in the kingdom. Thou hast arrived at two-thirds

of thy strength, and the other third thou hast not yet obtained; and when thou attainest to thy full power, none will be able to contend with thee. I am thy uncle, thy mother's brother, and I am brother to the man in whose house thou wast last night." Then Peredur and his uncle discoursed together, and he beheld two youths enter the hall, and proceed up to the chamber, bearing a spear of mighty size, with three streams of blood flowing from the point to the ground. And when all the company saw this, they began wailing and lamenting. But for all that, the man did not break off his discourse with Peredur. And as he did not tell Peredur the meaning of what he saw, he forbore to ask him concerning it. And when the clamour had a little subsided, behold two maidens entered, with a large salver between them, in which was a man's head, surrounded by a profusion of blood. And thereupon the company of the court made so great an outcry, that it was irksome to be in the same hall with them. But at length they were silent. And when time was that they should sleep, Peredur was brought into a fair chamber.

And the next day, with his uncle's permission, he rode forth. And he came to a wood, and far within the wood he heard a loud cry, and he saw a beautiful woman with auburn hair, and a horse with a saddle upon it, standing near her, and a corpse by her side. And as she strove to place the corpse upon the horse, it fell to the ground, and thereupon she made a great lamentation. "Tell me, sister," said Peredur, "wherefore art thou bewailing?" "Oh! accursed Peredur, little pity has my ill-fortune ever met with from thee." "Wherefore," said Peredur, "am I accursed?" "Because thou wast the cause of thy mother's death; for when thou didst ride forth against her will, anguish seized upon her heart, so that she died; and therefore art thou accursed. And the dwarf and the dwarfess that thou sawest at Arthur's Court were the dwarfs of thy father and mother; and I am thy foster-sister, and this was my wedded husband, and he was slain by the knight that is in the glade in the wood; and do not thou go near him, lest thou shouldest be slain by him likewise." "My sister, thou dost reproach me wrongfully; through my having so long remained amongst you, I shall scarcely vanquish him; and had I continued longer, it would, indeed, be difficult for me to

succeed. Cease, therefore, thy lamenting, for it is of no avail, and I will bury the body, and then I will go in quest of the knight, and see if I can do vengeance upon him." And when he had buried the body, they went to the place where the knight was, and found him riding proudly along the glade; and he inquired of Peredur whence he came. "I come from Arthur's Court." "And art thou one of Arthur's men?" "Yes, by my faith." "A profitable alliance, truly, is that of Arthur." And without further parlance, they encountered one another, and immediately Peredur overthrew the knight, and he besought mercy of Peredur. "Mercy shalt thou have," said he, "upon these terms, that thou take this woman in marriage, and do her all the honour and reverence in thy power, seeing thou hast, without cause, slain her wedded husband; and that thou go to Arthur's Court, and shew him that it was I that overthrew thee, to do him honour and service; and that thou tell him that I will never come to his Court again until I have met with the tall man that is there, to take vengeance upon him for his insult to the dwarf and dwarfess." And he took the knight's assurance, that he would perform all this. Then the knight provided the lady with a horse and garments that were suitable for her, and took her with him to Arthur's Court. And he told Arthur all that had occurred, and gave the defiance to Kai. And Arthur and all his household reproved Kai, for having driven such a youth as Peredur from his Court.

Said Owain the son of Urien, "This youth will never come into the Court until Kai has gone forth from it." "By my faith," said Arthur, "I will search all the deserts in the Island of Britain, until I find Peredur, and then let him and his adversary do their utmost to each other."

Then Peredur rode forward. And he came to a desert wood, where he saw not the track either of men or animals, and where there was nothing but bushes and weeds. And at the upper end of the wood he saw a vast castle, wherein were many strong towers; and when he came near the gate, he found the weeds taller than he had seen them elsewhere. And he struck the gate with the shaft of his lance, and thereupon behold a lean, auburn-haired youth came to an opening in the battlements. "Choose thou, chieftain," said he, "whether shall I open the gate unto thee, or shall I announce unto those

that are chief, that thou art at the gateway?" "Say that I am here," said Peredur, "and if it is desired that I should enter, I will go in." And the youth came back, and opened the gate for Peredur. And when he went into the hall, he beheld eighteen youths, lean and red-headed, of the same height, and of the same aspect, and of the same dress, and of the same age as the one who had opened the gate for him. And they were well skilled in courtesy and in service. And they disarrayed him. Then they sat down to discourse. Thereupon, behold five maidens came from the chamber into the hall. And Peredur was certain that he had never seen another of so fair an aspect as the chief of the maidens. And she had an old garment of satin upon her, which had once been handsome, but was then so tattered, that her skin could be seen through it. And whiter was her skin than the bloom of crystal, and her hair and her two eyebrows were blacker than jet, and on her cheeks were two red spots, redder than whatever is reddest. And the maiden welcomed Peredur, and put her arms about his neck, and made him sit down beside her. Not long after this he saw two nuns enter, and a flask full of wine was borne by one, and six loaves of white bread by the other. "Lady," said they, "Heaven is witness, that there is not so much of food and liquor as this left in yonder Convent this night." Then they went to meat, and Peredur observed that the maiden wished to give more of the food and of the liquor to him than to any of the others. "My sister," said Peredur, "I will share out the food and the liquor." "Not so, my soul," said she. "By my faith but I will." So Peredur took the bread, and he gave an equal portion of it to each alike, as well as a cup full of the liquor. And when it was time for them to sleep, a chamber was prepared for Peredur, and he went to rest.

"Behold, sister," said the youths to the fairest and most exalted of the maidens, "we have counsel for thee." "What may it be?" she inquired. "Go to the youth that is in the upper chamber, and offer to become his wife, or the lady of his love, if it seem well to him." "That were indeed unfitting," said she. "Hitherto I have not been the lady-love of any knight, and to make him such an offer before I am wooed by him, that, truly, can I not do." "By our confession to Heaven, unless thou actest thus, we will leave thee here to thy enemies, to do as they will with thee." And through fear of this, the

maiden went forth; and shedding tears, she proceeded to the chamber. And with the noise of the door opening, Peredur awoke; and the maiden was weeping and lamenting. "Tell me, my sister," said Peredur, "wherefore dost thou weep?" "I will tell thee, lord," said she. "My father possessed these dominions as their chief, and this palace was his, and with it he held the best earldom in the kingdom; then the son of another earl sought me of my father, and I was not willing to be given unto him, and my father would not give me against my will, either to him or any earl in the world. And my father had no child except myself. And after my father's death, these dominions came into my own hands, and then was I less willing to accept him than before. So he made war upon me, and conquered all my possessions, except this one house. And through the valour of the men whom thou hast seen, who are my foster-brothers, and the strength of the house, it can never be taken while food and drink remain. And now our provisions are exhausted; but, as thou hast seen, we have been fed by the nuns, to whom the country is free. And at length they also are without supply of food or liquor. And at no later date than to-morrow, the earl will come against this place with all his forces; and if I fall into his power, my fate will be no better than to be given over to the grooms of his horses. Therefore, lord, I am come to offer to place myself in thy hands, that thou mayest succour me, either by taking me hence, or by defending me here, whichever may seem best unto thee." "Go, my sister," said he, "and sleep; nor will I depart from thee until I do that which thou requirest, or prove whether I can assist thee or not." The maiden went again to rest; and the next morning she came to Peredur, and saluted him. "Heaven prosper thee, my soul, and what tidings dost thou bring?" "None other, than that the earl and all his forces have alighted at the gate, and I never beheld any place so covered with tents, and thronged with knights challenging others to the combat." "Truly," said Peredur, "let my horse be made ready." So his horse was accoutred, and he arose and sallied forth to the meadow. And there was a knight riding proudly along the meadow, having raised the signal for battle. And they encountered, and Peredur threw the knight over his horse's crupper to the ground. And at the close of the day, one of the chief knights

came to fight with him, and he overthrew him also, so that he besought his mercy. "Who art thou?" said Peredur. "Verily," said he, "I am Master of the Household to the earl." "And how much of the countess's possessions is there in thy power?" "The third part, verily," answered he. "Then," said Peredur, "restore to her the third of her possessions in full, and all the profit thou hast made by them, and bring meat and drink for a hundred men, with their horses and arms, to her court this night. And thou shalt remain her captive, unless she wish to take thy life." And this he did forthwith. And that night the maiden was right joyful, and they fared plenteously.

And the next day Peredur rode forth to the meadow; and that day he vanquished a multitude of the host. And at the close of the day, there came a proud and stately knight, and Peredur overthrew him, and he besought his mercy. "Who art thou?" said Peredur. "I am Steward of the Palace," said he. "And how much of the maiden's possessions are under thy control?" "One-third part," answered he. "Verily," said Peredur, "thou shalt fully restore to the maiden her possessions, and, moreover, thou shalt give her meat and drink for two hundred men, and their horses and their arms. And for thyself, thou shalt be her captive." And immediately it was so done.

And the third day Peredur rode forth to the meadow; and he vanquished more that day than on either of the preceding. And at the close of the day, an earl came to encounter him, and he overthrew him, and he besought his mercy. "Who art thou?" said Peredur. "I am the earl," said he. "I will not conceal it from thee." "Verily," said Peredur, "thou shalt restore the whole of the maiden's earldom, and shalt give her thine own earldom in addition thereto, and meat and drink for three hundred men, and their horses and arms, and thou thyself shalt remain in her power." And thus it was fulfilled. And Peredur tarried three weeks in the country, causing tribute and obedience to be paid to the maiden, and the government to be placed in her hands. "With thy leave," said Peredur, "I will go hence." "Verily, my brother, desirest thou this?" "Yes, by my faith; and had it not been for love of thee, I should not have been here thus long." "My soul," said she, "who art thou?" "I am Peredur the son of Evrawc from the North; and if ever thou



art in trouble or in danger, acquaint me therewith, and if I can, I will protect thee.”

So Peredur rode forth. And far thence there met him a lady, mounted on a horse that was lean, and covered with sweat; and she saluted the youth. “Whence comest thou, my sister?” Then she told him the cause of her journey. Now she was the wife of the Lord of the Glade. “Behold,” said he, “I am the knight through whom thou art in trouble, and he shall repent it, who has treated thee thus.” Thereupon, behold a knight rode up, and he inquired of Peredur, if he had seen a knight such as he was seeking. “Hold thy peace,” said Peredur, “I am he whom thou seekest; and by my faith, thou deservest ill of thy household for thy treatment of the maiden, for she is innocent concerning me.” So they encountered, and they were not long in combat ere Peredur overthrew the knight, and he besought his mercy. “Mercy thou shalt have,” said Peredur, “so thou wilt return by the way thou camest, and declare that thou holdest the maiden innocent, and so that thou wilt acknowledge unto her the reverse thou hast sustained at my hands.” And the knight plighted him his faith thereto.

Then Peredur rode forward. And above him he beheld a castle, and thitherward he went. And he struck upon the gate with his lance, and then, behold, a comely auburn-haired youth opened the gate, and he had the stature of a warrior, and the years of a boy. And when Peredur came into the hall, there was a tall and stately lady sitting in a chair, and many handmaidens around her; and the lady rejoiced at his coming. And when it was time, they went to meat. And after their repast was finished, “It were well for thee, chieftain,” said she, “to go elsewhere to sleep.” “Wherefore can I not sleep here?” said Peredur. “Nine sorceresses are here, my soul, of the sorceresses of Gloucester, and their father and their mother are with them; and unless we can make our escape before daybreak, we shall be slain; and already they have conquered and laid waste all the country, except this one dwelling.” “Behold,” said Peredur, “I will remain here to-night, and if you are in trouble, I will do you what service I can; but harm shall you not receive from me.” So they went to rest. And with the break of day, Peredur heard a dreadful outcry. And he hastily arose, and went forth in

his vest and his doublet, with his sword about his neck, and he saw a sorceress overtake one of the watch, who cried out violently. Peredur attacked the sorceress, and struck her upon the head with his sword, so that he flattened her helmet and her head-piece like a dish upon her head. "Thy mercy, goodly Peredur, son of Evrawc, and the mercy of Heaven." "How knowest thou, hag, that I am Peredur?" "By destiny, and the foreknowledge that I should suffer harm from thee. And thou shalt take a horse and armour of me; and with me thou shalt go to learn chivalry and the use of thy arms." Said Peredur, "Thou shalt have mercy, if thou pledge thy faith thou wilt never more injure the dominions of the Countess." And Peredur took surety of this, and with permission of the Countess, he set forth with the sorceress to the palace of the sorceresses. And there he remained for three weeks, and then he made choice of a horse and arms, and went his way.

And in the evening he entered a valley, and at the head of the valley he came to a hermit's cell, and the hermit welcomed him gladly, and there he spent the night. And in the morning he arose, and when he went forth, behold a shower of snow had fallen the night before, and a hawk had killed a wild fowl in front of the cell. And the noise of the horse scared the hawk away, and a raven alighted upon the bird. And Peredur stood, and compared the blackness of the raven and the whiteness of the snow, and the redness of the blood, to the hair of the lady that best he loved, which was blacker than jet, and to her skin which was whiter than the snow, and to the two red spots upon her cheeks, which were redder than the blood upon the snow appeared to be.

Now Arthur and his household were in search of Peredur. "Know ye," said Arthur, "who is the knight with the long spear that stands by the brook up yonder?" "Lord," said one of them, "I will go and learn who he is." So the youth came to the place where Peredur was, and asked him what he did thus, and who he was. And from the intensity with which he thought upon the lady whom best he loved, he gave him no answer. Then the youth thrust at Peredur with his lance, and Peredur turned upon him, and struck him over his horse's crupper to the ground. And after this, four-and-twenty youths came to him, and he did not answer one more than another, but gave the

same reception to all, bringing them with one single thrust to the ground. And then came Kai, and spoke to Peredur rudely and angrily; and Peredur took him with his lance under the jaw, and cast him from him with a thrust, so that he broke his arm and his shoulder-blade, and he rode over him one-and-twenty times. And while he lay thus, stunned with the violence of the pain that he had suffered, his horse returned back at a wild and prancing pace. And when the household saw the horse come back without his rider, they rode forth in haste to the place where the encounter had been. And when they first came there, they thought that Kai was slain; but they found that if he had a skilful physician, he yet might live. And Peredur moved not from his meditation, on seeing the concourse that was around Kai. And Kai was brought to Arthur's tent, and Arthur caused skilful physicians to come to him. And Arthur was grieved that Kai had met with this reverse, for he loved him greatly.

"Then," said Gwalchmai, "it is not fitting that any should disturb an honourable knight from his thought unadvisedly; for either he is pondering some damage that he has sustained, or he is thinking of the lady whom best he loves. And through such ill-advised proceeding, perchance this misadventure has befallen him who last met with him. And if it seem well to thee, lord, I will go and see if this knight hath changed from his thought; and if he has, I will ask him courteously to come and visit thee." Then Kai was wroth, and he spoke angry and spiteful words. "Gwalchmai," said he, "I know that thou wilt bring him because he is fatigued. Little praise and honour, nevertheless, wilt thou have from vanquishing a weary knight, who is tired with fighting. Yet thus hast thou gained the advantage over many. And while thy speech and thy soft words last, a coat of thin linen were armour sufficient for thee, and thou wilt not need to break either lance or sword in fighting with the knight in the state he is in." Then said Gwalchmai to Kai, "Thou mightest use more pleasant words, wert thou so minded: and it behoves thee not upon me to wreak thy wrath and thy displeasure. Methinks I shall bring the knight hither with me without breaking either my arm or my shoulder." Then said Arthur to Gwalchmai, "Thou speakest like a wise and prudent man; go, and take enough of armour

about thee, and choose thy horse.” And Gwalchmai accoutred himself and rode forward hastily to the place where Peredur was.

And Peredur was resting on the shaft of his spear, pondering the same thought, and Gwalchmai came to him without any signs of hostility, and said to him, “If I thought that it would be as agreeable to thee as it would be to me, I would converse with thee. I have also a message from Arthur unto thee, to pray thee to come and visit him. And two men have been before on this errand.” “That is true,” said Peredur, “and uncourteously they came. They attacked me, and I was annoyed thereat, for it was not pleasing to me to be drawn from the thought that I was in, for I was thinking of the lady whom best I love, and thus was she brought to my mind:—I was looking upon the snow, and upon the raven, and upon the drops of the blood of the bird that the hawk had killed upon the snow. And I bethought me that her whiteness was like that of the snow, and that the blackness of her hair and her eyebrows like that of the raven, and that the two red spots upon her cheeks were like the two drops of blood.” Said Gwalchmai, “This was not an ungentle thought, and I should marvel if it were pleasant to thee to be drawn from it.” “Tell me,” said Peredur, “is Kai in Arthur’s Court?” “He is,” said he, “and behold he is the knight that fought with thee last; and it would have been better for him had he not come, for his arm and his shoulder-blade were broken with the fall which he had from thy spear.” “Verily,” said Peredur, “I am not sorry to have thus begun to avenge the insult to the dwarf and dwarfess.” Then Gwalchmai marvelled to hear him speak of the dwarf and the dwarfess; and he approached him, and threw his arms around his neck, and asked him what was his name. “Peredur the son of Evrawc am I called,” said he; “and thou, Who art thou?” “I am called Gwalchmai,” he replied. “I am right glad to meet with thee,” said Peredur, “for in every country where I have been I have heard of thy fame for prowess and uprightness, and I solicit thy fellowship.” “Thou shalt have it, by my faith, and grant me thine,” said he, “Gladly will I do so,” answered Peredur.

So they rode forth together joyfully towards the place where Arthur was, and when Kai saw them coming, he said, “I knew that Gwalchmai

needed not to fight the knight. And it is no wonder that he should gain fame; more can he do by his fair words than I by the strength of my arm.” And Peredur went with Gwalchmai to his tent, and they took off their armour. And Peredur put on garments like those that Gwalchmai wore, and they went together unto Arthur, and saluted him. “Behold, lord,” said Gwalchmai, “him whom thou hast sought so long.” “Welcome unto thee, chieftain,” said Arthur. “With me thou shalt remain; and had I known thy valour had been such, thou shouldst not have left me as thou didst; nevertheless, this was predicted of thee by the dwarf and the dwarfess, whom Kai ill-treated and whom thou hast avenged.” And hereupon, behold there came the Queen and her handmaidens, and Peredur saluted them. And they were rejoiced to see him, and bade him welcome. And Arthur did him great honour and respect, and they returned towards Caerlleon.

And the first night Peredur came to Caerlleon to Arthur’s Court, and as he walked in the city after his repast, behold, there met him Angharad Law Eurawc. “By my faith, sister,” said Peredur, “thou art a beauteous and lovely maiden; and, were it pleasing to thee, I could love thee above all women.” “I pledge my faith,” said she, “that I do not love thee, nor will I ever do so.” “I also pledge my faith,” said Peredur, “that I will never speak a word to any Christian again, until thou come to love me above all men.”

The next day Peredur went forth by the high road, along a mountain-ridge, and he saw a valley of a circular form, the confines of which were rocky and wooded. And the flat part of the valley was in meadows, and there were fields betwixt the meadows and the wood. And in the bosom of the wood he saw large black houses of uncouth workmanship. And he dismounted, and led his horse towards the wood. And a little way within the wood he saw a rocky ledge, along which the road lay. And upon the ledge was a lion bound by a chain, and sleeping. And beneath the lion he saw a deep pit of immense size, full of the bones of men and animals. And Peredur drew his sword and struck the lion, so that he fell into the mouth of the pit and hung there by the chain; and with a second blow he struck the chain and broke it, and the lion fell into the pit; and Peredur led his horse over the rocky ledge, until he came into the valley. And in the centre of the

valley he saw a fair castle, and he went towards it. And in the meadow by the castle he beheld a huge grey man sitting, who was larger than any man he had ever before seen. And two young pages were shooting the hilts of their daggers, of the bone of the sea-horse. And one of the pages had red hair, and the other auburn. And they went before him to the place where the grey man was, and Peredur saluted him. And the grey man said, "Disgrace to the beard of my porter." Then Peredur understood that the porter was the lion.—And the grey man and the pages went together into the castle, and Peredur accompanied them; and he found it a fair and noble place. And they proceeded to the hall, and the tables were already laid, and upon them was abundance of food and liquor. And thereupon he saw an aged woman and a young woman come from the chamber; and they were the most stately women he had ever seen. Then they washed and went to meat, and the grey man sat in the upper seat at the head of the table, and the aged woman next to him. And Peredur and the maiden were placed together, and the two young pages served them. And the maiden gazed sorrowfully upon Peredur, and Peredur asked the maiden wherefore she was sad. "For thee, my soul; for, from when I first beheld thee, I have loved thee above all men. And it pains me to know that so gentle a youth as thou should have such a doom as awaits thee to-morrow. Sawest thou the numerous black houses in the bosom of the wood? All these belong to the vassals of the grey man yonder, who is my father. And they are all giants. And to-morrow they will rise up against thee, and will slay thee. And the Round Valley is this valley called." "Listen, fair maiden, wilt thou contrive that my horse and arms be in the same lodging with me to-night?" "Gladly will I cause it so to be, by Heaven, if I can."

And when it was time for them to sleep rather than to carouse, they went to rest. And the maiden caused Peredur's horse and arms to be in the same lodging with him. And the next morning Peredur heard a great tumult of men and horses around the castle. And Peredur arose, and armed himself and his horse, and went to the meadow. Then the aged woman and the maiden came to the grey man: "Lord," said they, "take the word of the youth, that he will never disclose what he has seen in this place, and we will

be his sureties that he keep it.” “I will not do so, by my faith,” said the grey man. So Peredur fought with the host, and towards evening he had slain the one-third of them without receiving any hurt himself. Then said the aged woman, “Behold, many of thy host have been slain by the youth; do thou, therefore, grant him mercy.” “I will not grant it, by my faith,” said he. And the aged woman and the fair maiden were upon the battlements of the castle, looking forth. And at that juncture, Peredur encountered the yellow-haired youth and slew him. “Lord,” said the maiden, “grant the young man mercy.” “That will I not do, by Heaven,” he replied; and thereupon Peredur attacked the auburn-haired youth, and slew him likewise. “It were better that thou hadst accorded mercy to the youth before he had slain thy two sons; for now scarcely wilt thou thyself escape from him.” “Go, maiden, and beseech the youth to grant mercy unto us, for we yield ourselves into his hands.” So the maiden came to the place where Peredur was, and besought mercy for her father, and for all such of his vassals as had escaped alive. “Thou shalt have it, on condition that thy father and all that are under him go and render homage to Arthur, and tell him that it was his vassal Peredur that did him this service.” “This will we do willingly, by Heaven.” “And you shall also receive baptism; and I will send to Arthur, and beseech him to bestow this valley upon thee and upon thy heirs after thee for ever.” Then they went in, and the grey man and the tall woman saluted Peredur. And the grey man said unto him, “Since I have possessed this valley I have not seen any Christian depart with his life, save thyself. And we will go to do homage to Arthur, and to embrace the faith and be baptized.” Then said Peredur, “To Heaven I render thanks that I have not broken my vow to the lady that best I love, which was, that I would not speak one word unto any Christian.”

That night they tarried there. And the next day, in the morning, the grey man, with his company, set forth to Arthur’s Court; and they did homage unto Arthur, and he caused them to be baptized. And the grey man told Arthur that it was Peredur that had vanquished them. And Arthur gave the valley to the grey man and his company, to hold it of him as Peredur had

besought. And with Arthur's permission, the grey man went back to the Round Valley.

Peredur rode forward next day, and he traversed a vast tract of desert, in which no dwellings were. And at length he came to a habitation, mean and small. And there he heard that there was a serpent that lay upon a gold ring, and suffered none to inhabit the country for seven miles around. And Peredur came to the place where he heard the serpent was. And angrily, furiously, and desperately fought he with the serpent; and at last he killed it, and took away the ring. And thus he was for a long time without speaking a word to any Christian. And therefrom he lost his colour and his aspect, through extreme longing after the Court of Arthur, and the society of the lady whom best he loved, and of his companions. Then he proceeded forward to Arthur's Court, and on the road there met him Arthur's household going on a particular errand, with Kai at their head. And Peredur knew them all, but none of the household recognized him. "Whence comest thou, chieftain?" said Kai. And this he asked him twice and three times, and he answered him not. And Kai thrust him through the thigh with his lance. And lest he should be compelled to speak, and to break his vow, he went on without stopping. "Then," said Gwalchmai, "I declare to Heaven, Kai, that thou hast acted ill in committing such an outrage on a youth like this, who cannot speak."

And Gwalchmai returned back to Arthur's Court. "Lady," said he to Gwenhwyvar, "seest thou how wicked an outrage Kai has committed upon this youth who cannot speak; for Heaven's sake, and for mine, cause him to have medical care before I come back, and I will repay thee the charge."

And before the men returned from their errand, a knight came to the meadow beside Arthur's Palace, to dare some one to the encounter. And his challenge was accepted; and Peredur fought with him, and overthrew him. And for a week he overthrew one knight every day.

And one day, Arthur and his household were going to Church, and they beheld a knight who had raised the signal for combat. "Verily," said Arthur, "by the valour of men, I will not go hence until I have my horse and my arms to overthrow yonder boor." Then went the attendants to fetch Arthur's



horse and arms. And Peredur met the attendants as they were going back, and he took the horse and arms from them, and proceeded to the meadow; and all those who saw him arise and go to do battle with the knight, went upon the tops of the houses, and the mounds, and the high places, to behold the combat. And Peredur beckoned with his hand to the knight to commence the fight. And the knight thrust at him, but he was not thereby moved from where he stood. And Peredur spurred his horse, and ran at him wrathfully, furiously, fiercely, desperately, and with mighty rage, and he gave him a thrust, deadly-wounding, severe, furious, adroit, and strong, under his jaw, and raised him out of his saddle, and cast him a long way from him. And Peredur went back, and left the horse and the arms with the attendant as before, and he went on foot to the Palace.

Then Peredur went by the name of the Dumb Youth. And behold, Angharad Law Eurawc met him. "I declare to Heaven, chieftain," said she, "woful is it that thou canst not speak; for couldst thou speak, I would love thee best of all men; and by my faith, although thou canst not, I do love thee above all." "Heaven reward thee, my sister," said Peredur, "by my faith I also do love thee." Thereupon it was known that he was Peredur. And then he held fellowship with Gwalchmai, and Owain the son of Urien, and all the household, and he remained in Arthur's Court.

Arthur was in Caerlleon upon Usk; and he went to hunt, and Peredur went with him. And Peredur let loose his dog upon a hart, and the dog killed the hart in a desert place. And a short space from him he saw signs of a dwelling, and towards the dwelling he went, and he beheld a hall, and at the door of the hall he found bald swarthy youths playing at chess. And when he entered, he beheld three maidens sitting on a bench, and they were all clothed alike, as became persons of high rank. And he came, and sat by them upon the bench; and one of the maidens looked steadfastly upon Peredur, and wept. And Peredur asked her wherefore she was weeping. "Through grief, that I should see so fair a youth as thou art, slain." "Who will slay me?" inquired Peredur. "If thou art so daring as to remain here to-night, I will tell thee." "How great soever my danger may be from remaining here, I will listen unto thee." "This Palace is owned by him who

is my father,” said the maiden, “and he slays every one who comes hither without his leave.” “What sort of a man is thy father, that he is able to slay every one thus?” “A man who does violence and wrong unto his neighbours, and who renders justice unto none.” And hereupon he saw the youths arise and clear the chessmen from the board. And he heard a great tumult; and after the tumult there came in a huge black one-eyed man, and the maidens arose to meet him. And they disarrayed him, and he went and sat down; and after he had rested and pondered awhile, he looked at Peredur, and asked who the knight was. “Lord,” said one of the maidens, “he is the fairest and gentlest youth that ever thou didst see. And for the sake of Heaven, and of thine own dignity, have patience with him.” “For thy sake I will have patience, and I will grant him his life this night.” Then Peredur came towards them to the fire, and partook of food and liquor, and entered into discourse with the ladies. And being elated with the liquor, he said to the black man, “It is a marvel to me, so mighty as thou sayest thou art, who could have put out thine eye.” “It is one of my habits,” said the black man, “that whosoever puts to me the question which thou hast asked, shall not escape with his life, either as a free gift or for a price.” “Lord,” said the maiden, “whatsoever he may say to thee in jest, and through the excitement of liquor, make good that which thou saidst and didst promise me just now.” “I will do so, gladly, for thy sake,” said he. “Willingly will I grant him his life this night.” And that night thus they remained.

And the next day the black man got up, and put on his armour, and said to Peredur, “Arise, man, and suffer death.” And Peredur said unto him, “Do one of two things, black man; if thou wilt fight with me, either throw off thy own armour, or give arms to me, that I may encounter thee.” “Ha, man,” said he, “couldst thou fight, if thou hadst arms? Take, then, what arms thou dost choose.” And thereupon the maiden came to Peredur with such arms as pleased him; and he fought with the black man, and forced him to crave his mercy. “Black man, thou shalt have mercy, provided thou tell me who thou art, and who put out thine eye.” “Lord, I will tell thee; I lost it in fighting with the Black Serpent of the Carn. There is a mound, which is called the Mound of Mourning; and on the mound there is a carn, and in the carn there

is a serpent, and on the tail of the serpent there is a stone, and the virtues of the stone are such, that whosoever should hold it in one hand, in the other he will have as much gold as he may desire. And in fighting with this serpent was it that I lost my eye. And the Black Oppressor am I called. And for this reason I am called the Black Oppressor, that there is not a single man around me whom I have not oppressed, and justice have I done unto none.” “Tell me,” said Peredur, “how far is it hence?” “The same day that thou settest forth, thou wilt come to the Palace of the Sons of the King of the Tortures.” “Wherefore are they called thus?” “The Addanc of the Lake slays them once every day. When thou goest thence, thou wilt come to the Court of the Countess of the Achievements.” “What achievements are there?” asked Peredur. “Three hundred men there are in her household, and unto every stranger that comes to the Court, the achievements of her household are related. And this is the manner of it,—the three hundred men of the household sit next unto the Lady; and that not through disrespect unto the guests, but that they may relate the achievements of the household. And the day that thou goest thence, thou wilt reach the Mound of Mourning, and round about the mound there are the owners of three hundred tents guarding the serpent.” “Since thou hast, indeed, been an oppressor so long,” said Peredur, “I will cause that thou continue so no longer.” So he slew him.

Then the maiden spoke, and began to converse with him. “If thou wast poor when thou camest here, henceforth thou wilt be rich through the treasure of the black man whom thou hast slain. Thou seest the many lovely maidens that there are in this Court; thou shalt have her whom thou best likest for the lady of thy love.” “Lady, I came not hither from my country to woo; but match yourselves as it liketh you with the comely youths I see here; and none of your goods do I desire, for I need them not.” Then Peredur rode forward, and he came to the Palace of the Sons of the King of the Tortures; and when he entered the Palace, he saw none but women; and they rose up, and were joyful at his coming; and as they began to discourse with him, he beheld a charger arrive, with a saddle upon it, and a corpse in the saddle. And one of the women arose, and took the corpse from the saddle, and anointed it in a vessel of warm water, which was below the

door, and placed precious balsam upon it; and the man rose up alive, and came to the place where Peredur was, and greeted him, and was joyful to see him. And two other men came in upon their saddles, and the maiden treated these two in the same manner as she had done the first. Then Peredur asked the chieftain wherefore it was thus. And they told him, that there was an Addanc in a cave, which slew them once every day. And thus they remained that night.

And next morning the youths arose to sally forth, and Peredur besought them, for the sake of the ladies of their love, to permit him to go with them; but they refused him, saying, "If thou shouldst be slain there, thou hast none to bring thee back to life again." And they rode forward, and Peredur followed after them; and, after they had disappeared out of his sight, he came to a mound, whereon sat the fairest lady he had ever beheld. "I know thy quest," said she; "thou art going to encounter the Addanc, and he will slay thee, and that not by courage, but by craft. He has a cave, and at the entrance of the cave there is a stone pillar, and he sees every one that enters, and none see him; and from behind the pillar he slays every one with a poisonous dart. And if thou wouldst pledge me thy faith to love me above all women, I would give thee a stone, by which thou shouldst see him when thou goest in, and he should not see thee." "I will, by my troth," said Peredur, "for when first I beheld thee I loved thee; and where shall I seek thee?" "When thou seekest me, seek towards India." And the maiden vanished, after placing the stone in Peredur's hand.

And he came towards a valley, through which ran a river; and the borders of the valley were wooded, and on each side of the river were level meadows. And on one side of the river he saw a flock of white sheep, and on the other a flock of black sheep. And whenever one of the white sheep bleated, one of the black sheep would cross over and become white; and when one of the black sheep bleated, one of the white sheep would cross over and become black. And he saw a tall tree by the side of the river, one half of which was in flames from the root to the top, and the other half was green and in full leaf. And nigh thereto he saw a youth sitting upon a mound, and two greyhounds, white-breasted and spotted, in leashes, lying

by his side. And certain was he that he had never seen a youth of so royal a bearing as he. And in the wood opposite he heard hounds raising a herd of deer. And Peredur saluted the youth, and the youth greeted him in return. And there were three roads leading from the mound; two of them were wide roads, and the third was more narrow. And Peredur inquired where the three roads went. "One of them goes to my palace," said the youth; "and one of two things I counsel thee to do; either to proceed to my palace, which is before thee, and where thou wilt find my wife, or else to remain here to see the hounds chasing the roused deer from the wood to the plain. And thou shalt see the best greyhounds thou didst ever behold, and the boldest in the chase, kill them by the water beside us; and when it is time to go to meat, my page will come with my horse to meet me, and thou shalt rest in my palace to-night." "Heaven reward thee; but I cannot tarry, for onward must I go." "The other road leads to the town, which is near here, and wherein food and liquor may be bought; and the road which is narrower than the others goes towards the cave of the Addanc." "With thy permission, young man, I will go that way."

And Peredur went towards the cave. And he took the stone in his left hand, and his lance in his right. And as he went in he perceived the Addanc, and he pierced him through with his lance, and cut off his head. And as he came from the cave, behold the three companions were at the entrance; and they saluted Peredur, and told him that there was a prediction that he should slay that monster. And Peredur gave the head to the young men, and they offered him in marriage whichever of the three sisters he might choose, and half their kingdom with her. "I came not hither to woo," said Peredur, "but if peradventure I took a wife, I should prefer your sister to all others." And Peredur rode forward, and he heard a noise behind him. And he looked back, and saw a man upon a red horse, with red armour upon him; and the man rode up by his side, and saluted him, and wished him the favour of Heaven and of man. And Peredur greeted the youth kindly. "Lord, I come to make a request unto thee." "What wouldest thou?" "That thou shouldest take me as thine attendant." "Whom then should I take as my attendant, if I did so?" "I will not conceal from thee what kindred I am of. Etlym Gleddiv

Coch am I called, an Earl from the East Country.” “I marvel that thou shouldest offer to become attendant to a man whose possessions are no greater than thine own; for I have but an earldom like thyself. But since thou desirest to be my attendant, I will take thee joyfully.”

And they went forward to the Court of the Countess, and all they of the Court were glad at their coming; and they were told it was not through disrespect they were placed below the household, but that such was the usage of the Court. For, whoever should overthrow the three hundred men of her household, would sit next the Countess, and she would love him above all men. And Peredur having overthrown the three hundred men of her household, sat down beside her, and the Countess said, “I thank Heaven that I have a youth so fair and so valiant as thou, since I have not obtained the man whom best I love.” “Who is he whom best thou lovest?” “By my faith, Etlym Gleddyv Coch is the man whom I love best, and I have never seen him.” “Of a truth, Etlym is my companion; and behold here he is, and for his sake did I come to joust with thy household. And he could have done so better than I, had it pleased him. And I do give thee unto him.” “Heaven reward thee, fair youth, and I will take the man whom I love above all others.” And the Countess became Etlym’s bride from that moment.

And the next day Peredur set forth towards the Mound of Mourning. “By thy hand, lord, but I will go with thee,” said Etlym. Then they went forwards till they came in sight of the mound and the tents. “Go unto yonder men,” said Peredur to Etlym, “and desire them to come and do me homage.” So Etlym went unto them, and said unto them thus,—“Come and do homage to my lord.” “Who is thy lord?” said they. “Peredur with the long lance is my lord,” said Etlym. “Were it permitted to slay a messenger, thou shouldest not go back to thy lord alive, for making unto Kings, and Earls, and Barons so arrogant a demand as to go and do him homage.” Peredur desired him to go back to them, and to give them their choice, either to do him homage, or to do battle with him. And they chose rather to do battle. And that day Peredur overthrew the owners of a hundred tents; and the next day he overthrew the owners of a hundred more; and the third day the remaining hundred took counsel to do homage to Peredur. And

Peredur inquired of them, wherefore they were there. And they told him they were guarding the serpent until he should die. "For then should we fight for the stone among ourselves, and whoever should be conqueror among us would have the stone." "Await here," said Peredur, "and I will go to encounter the serpent." "Not so, lord," said they; "we will go altogether to encounter the serpent." "Verily," said Peredur, "that will I not permit; for if the serpent be slain, I shall derive no more fame therefrom than one of you." Then he went to the place where the serpent was, and slew it, and came back to them, and said, "Reckon up what you have spent since you have been here, and I will repay you to the full." And he paid to each what he said was his claim. And he required of them only that they should acknowledge themselves his vassals. And he said to Etlym, "Go back unto her whom thou lovest best, and I will go forwards, and I will reward thee for having been my attendant." And he gave Etlym the stone. "Heaven repay thee and prosper thee," said Etlym.

And Peredur rode thence, and he came to the fairest valley he had ever seen, through which ran a river; and there he beheld many tents of various colours. And he marvelled still more at the number of water-mills and of wind-mills that he saw. And there rode up with him a tall auburn-haired man, in workman's garb, and Peredur inquired of him who he was. "I am the chief miller," said he, "of all the mills yonder." "Wilt thou give me lodging?" said Peredur. "I will, gladly," he answered. And Peredur came to the miller's house, and the miller had a fair and pleasant dwelling. And Peredur asked money as a loan from the miller, that he might buy meat and liquor for himself and for the household, and he promised that he would pay him again ere he went thence. And he inquired of the miller, wherefore such a multitude was there assembled. Said the miller to Peredur, "One thing is certain: either thou art a man from afar, or thou art beside thyself. The Empress of Cristinobyl the Great is here; and she will have no one but the man who is most valiant; for riches does she not require. And it was impossible to bring food for so many thousands as are here, therefore were all these mills constructed." And that night they took their rest.

And the next day Peredur arose, and he equipped himself and his horse for the tournament. And among the other tents he beheld one, which was the fairest he had ever seen. And he saw a beauteous maiden leaning her head out of a window of the tent, and he had never seen a maiden more lovely than she. And upon her was a garment of satin. And he gazed fixedly on the maiden, and began to love her greatly. And he remained there, gazing upon the maiden from morning until mid-day, and from mid-day until evening; and then the tournament was ended and he went to his lodging and drew off his armour. Then he asked money of the miller as a loan, and the miller's wife was wroth with Peredur; nevertheless, the miller lent him the money. And the next day he did in like manner as he had done the day before. And at night he came to his lodging, and took money as a loan from the miller. And the third day, as he was in the same place, gazing upon the maiden, he felt a hard blow between the neck and the shoulder, from the edge of an axe. And when he looked behind him, he saw that it was the miller; and the miller said to him, "Do one of two things: either turn thy head from hence, or go to the tournament." And Peredur smiled on the miller, and went to the tournament; and all that encountered him that day he overthrew. And as many as he vanquished he sent as a gift to the Empress, and their horses and arms he sent as a gift to the wife of the miller, in payment of the borrowed money. Peredur attended the tournament until all were overthrown, and he sent all the men to the prison of the Empress, and the horses and arms to the wife of the miller, in payment of the borrowed money. And the Empress sent to the Knight of the Mill, to ask him to come and visit her. And Peredur went not for the first nor for the second message. And the third time she sent a hundred knights to bring him against his will, and they went to him and told him their mission from the Empress. And Peredur fought well with them, and caused them to be bound like stags, and thrown into the mill-dyke. And the Empress sought advice of a wise man who was in her counsel; and he said to her, "With thy permission, I will go to him myself." So he came to Peredur, and saluted him, and besought him, for the sake of the lady of his love, to come and visit the Empress. And they went, together with the miller. And Peredur went and sat down in the outer



chamber of the tent, and she came and placed herself by his side. And there was but little discourse between them. And Peredur took his leave, and went to his lodging.

And the next day he came to visit her, and when he came into the tent there was no one chamber less decorated than the others. And they knew not where he would sit. And Peredur went and sat beside the Empress, and discoursed with her courteously. And while they were thus, they beheld a black man enter with a goblet full of wine in his hand. And he dropped upon his knee before the Empress, and besought her to give it to no one who would not fight with him for it. And she looked upon Peredur. "Lady," said he, "bestow on me the goblet." And Peredur drank the wine, and gave the goblet to the miller's wife. And while they were thus, behold there entered a black man of larger stature than the other, with a wild beast's claw in his hand, wrought into the form of a goblet and filled with wine. And he presented it to the Empress, and besought her to give it to no one but the man who would fight with him. "Lady," said Peredur, "bestow it on me." And she gave it to him. And Peredur drank the wine, and sent the goblet to the wife of the miller. And while they were thus, behold a rough-looking, crisp-haired man, taller than either of the others, came in with a bowl in his hand full of wine; and he bent upon his knee, and gave it into the hands of the Empress, and he besought her to give it to none but him who would fight with him for it; and she gave it to Peredur, and he sent it to the miller's wife. And that night Peredur returned to his lodging; and the next day he accoutred himself and his horse, and went to the meadow and slew the three men. Then Peredur proceeded to the tent, and the Empress said to him, "Goodly Peredur, remember the faith thou didst pledge me when I gave thee the stone, and thou didst kill the Addanc." "Lady," answered he, "thou sayest truth, I do remember it." And Peredur was entertained by the Empress fourteen years, as the story relates.

Arthur was at Caerlleon upon Usk, his principal palace; and in the centre of the floor of the hall were four men sitting on a carpet of velvet, Owain the son of Urien, and Gwalchmai the son of Gwyar, and Howel the son of Emyr Llydaw, and Peredur of the long lance. And thereupon they

saw a black curly-headed maiden enter, riding upon a yellow mule, with jagged thongs in her hand to urge it on; and having a rough and hideous aspect. Blacker were her face and her two hands than the blackest iron covered with pitch; and her hue was not more frightful than her form. High cheeks had she, and a face lengthened downwards, and a short nose with distended nostrils. And one eye was of a piercing mottled grey, and the other was as black as jet, deep-sunk in her head. And her teeth were long and yellow, more yellow were they than the flower of the broom. And her stomach rose from the breast-bone, higher than her chin. And her back was in the shape of a crook, and her legs were large and bony. And her figure was very thin and spare, except her feet and her legs, which were of huge size. And she greeted Arthur and all his household except Peredur. And to Peredur she spoke harsh and angry words. "Peredur, I greet thee not, seeing that thou dost not merit it. Blind was fate in giving thee fame and favour. When thou wast in the Court of the Lane King, and didst see there the youth bearing the streaming spear, from the points of which were drops of blood flowing in streams, even to the hand of the youth, and many other wonders likewise, thou didst not inquire their meaning nor their cause. Hadst thou done so, the King would have been restored to health, and his dominions to peace. Whereas from henceforth, he will have to endure battles and conflicts, and his knights will perish, and wives will be widowed, and maidens will be left portionless, and all this is because of thee." Then said she unto Arthur, "May it please thee, lord, my dwelling is far hence, in the stately castle of which thou hast heard, and therein are five hundred and sixty-six knights of the order of Chivalry, and the lady whom best he loves with each; and whoever would acquire fame in arms, and encounters, and conflicts, he will gain it there, if he deserve it. And whoso would reach the summit of fame and of honour, I know where he may find it. There is a castle on a lofty mountain, and there is a maiden therein, and she is detained a prisoner there, and whoever shall set her free will attain the summit of the fame of the world." And thereupon she rode away.

Said Gwalchmai, "By my faith, I will not rest tranquilly until I have proved if I can release the maiden." And many of Arthur's household joined

themselves with him. Then, likewise, said Peredur, "By my faith, I will not rest tranquilly until I know the story and the meaning of the lance whereof the black maiden spoke." And while they were equipping themselves, behold a knight came to the gate. And he had the size and the strength of a warrior, and was equipped with arms and habiliments. And he went forward, and saluted Arthur and all his household, except Gwalchmai. And the knight had upon his shoulder a shield, ingrained with gold, with a fesse of azure blue upon it, and his whole armour was of the same hue. And he said to Gwalchmai, "Thou didst slay my lord by thy treachery and deceit, and that will I prove upon thee." Then Gwalchmai rose up. "Behold," said he, "here is my gage against thee, to maintain, either in this place or wherever else thou wilt, that I am not a traitor or deceiver." "Before the King whom I obey, will I that my encounter with thee take place," said the knight. "Willingly," said Gwalchmai; "go forward, and I will follow thee." So the knight went forth, and Gwalchmai accoutred himself, and there was offered unto him abundance of armour, but he would take none but his own. And when Gwalchmai and Peredur were equipped, they set forth to follow him, by reason of their fellowship and of the great friendship that was between them. And they did not go after him in company together, but each went his own way.

At the dawn of day Gwalchmai came to a valley, and in the valley he saw a fortress, and within the fortress a vast palace and lofty towers around it. And he beheld a knight coming out to hunt from the other side, mounted on a spirited black snorting palfrey, that advanced at a prancing pace, proudly stepping, and nimbly bounding, and sure of foot; and this was the man to whom the palace belonged. And Gwalchmai saluted him. "Heaven prosper thee, chieftain," said he, "and whence comest thou?" "I come," answered Gwalchmai, "from the Court of Arthur." "And art thou Arthur's vassal?" "Yes, by my faith," said Gwalchmai. "I will give thee good counsel," said the knight. "I see that thou art tired and weary; go unto my palace, if it may please thee, and tarry there to-night." "Willingly, lord," said he, "and Heaven reward thee." "Take this ring as a token to the porter, and go forward to yonder tower, and therein thou wilt find my sister." And

Gwalchmai went to the gate, and showed the ring, and proceeded to the tower. And on entering he beheld a large blazing fire, burning without smoke and with a bright and lofty flame, and a beauteous and stately maiden was sitting on a chair by the fire. And the maiden was glad at his coming, and welcomed him, and advanced to meet him. And he went and sat beside the maiden, and they took their repast. And when their repast was over, they discoursed pleasantly together. And while they were thus, behold there entered a venerable hoary-headed man. "Ah! base girl," said he, "if thou didst think it was right for thee to entertain and to sit by yonder man, thou wouldest not do so." And he withdrew his head, and went forth. "Ah! chieftain," said the maiden, "if thou wilt do as I counsel thee, thou wilt shut the door, lest the man should have a plot against thee." Upon that Gwalchmai arose, and when he came near unto the door, the man, with sixty others, fully armed, were ascending the tower. And Gwalchmai defended the door with a chessboard, that none might enter until the man should return from the chase. And thereupon, behold the Earl arrived. "What is all this?" asked he. "It is a sad thing," said the hoary-headed man; "the young girl yonder has been sitting and eating with him who slew your father. He is Gwalchmai, the son of Gwyar." "Hold thy peace, then," said the Earl, "I will go in." And the Earl was joyful concerning Gwalchmai. "Ha! chieftain," said he, "it was wrong of thee to come to my court, when thou knewest that thou didst slay my father; and though we cannot avenge him, Heaven will avenge him upon thee." "My soul," said Gwalchmai, "thus it is: I came not here either to acknowledge or to deny having slain thy father; but I am on a message from Arthur, and therefore do I crave the space of a year until I shall return from my embassy, and then, upon my faith, I will come back unto this palace, and do one of two things, either acknowledge it, or deny it." And the time was granted him willingly; and he remained there that night. And the next morning he rode forth. And the story relates nothing further of Gwalchmai respecting this adventure.

And Peredur rode forward. And he wandered over the whole island, seeking tidings of the black maiden, and he could meet with none. And he came to an unknown land, in the centre of a valley, watered by a river. And

as he traversed the valley he beheld a horseman coming towards him, and wearing the garments of a priest; and he besought his blessing. "Wretched man," said he, "thou meritest no blessing, and thou wouldest not be profited by one, seeing that thou art clad in armour on such a day as this." "And what day is to-day?" said Peredur. "To-day is Good Friday," he answered. "Chide me not that I knew not this, seeing that it is a year to-day since I journeyed forth from my country." Then he dismounted, and led his horse in his hand. And he had not proceeded far along the high road before he came to a cross road, and the cross road traversed a wood. And on the other side of the wood he saw an unfortified castle, which appeared to be inhabited. And at the gate of the castle there met him the priest whom he had seen before, and he asked his blessing. "The blessing of Heaven be unto thee," said he, "it is more fitting to travel in thy present guise than as thou wast erewhile; and this night thou shalt tarry with me." So he remained there that night.

And the next day Peredur sought to go forth. "To-day may no one journey. Thou shalt remain with me to-day and to-morrow, and the day following, and I will direct thee as best I may to the place which thou art seeking." And the fourth day Peredur sought to go forth, and he entreated the priest to tell him how he should find the Castle of Wonders. "What I know thereof I will tell thee," he replied. "Go over yonder mountain, and on the other side of the mountain thou wilt come to a river, and in the valley wherein the river runs is a King's palace, wherein the King sojourned during Easter. And if thou mayest have tidings anywhere of the Castle of Wonders, thou wilt have them there."

Then Peredur rode forward. And he came to the valley in which was the river, and there met him a number of men going to hunt, and in the midst of them was a man of exalted rank, and Peredur saluted him. "Choose, chieftain," said the man, "whether thou wilt go with me to the chase, or wilt proceed to my palace, and I will dispatch one of my household to commend thee to my daughter, who is there, and who will entertain thee with food and liquor until I return from hunting; and whatever may be thine errand, such as I can obtain for thee thou shalt gladly have." And the King sent a little

yellow page with him as an attendant; and when they came to the palace the lady had arisen, and was about to wash before meat. Peredur went forward, and she saluted him joyfully, and placed him by her side. And they took their repast. And whatsoever Peredur said unto her, she laughed loudly, so that all in the palace could hear. Then spoke the yellow page to the lady. "By my faith," said he, "this youth is already thy husband; or if he be not, thy mind and thy thoughts are set upon him." And the little yellow page went unto the King, and told him that it seemed to him that the youth whom he had met with was his daughter's husband, or if he were not so already that he would shortly become so unless he were cautious. "What is thy counsel in this matter, youth?" said the King. "My counsel is," he replied, "that thou set strong men upon him, to seize him, until thou hast ascertained the truth respecting this." So he set strong men upon Peredur, who seized him and cast him into prison. And the maiden went before her father, and asked him wherefore he had caused the youth from Arthur's Court to be imprisoned. "In truth," he answered, "he shall not be free to-night, nor to-morrow, nor the day following, and he shall not come from where he is." She replied not to what the King had said, but she went to the youth. "Is it unpleasant to thee to be here?" said she. "I should not care if I were not," he replied. "Thy couch and thy treatment shall be in no wise inferior to that of the King himself, and thou shalt have the best entertainment that the palace affords. And if it were more pleasing to thee that my couch should be here, that I might discourse with thee, it should be so, cheerfully." "This can I not refuse," said Peredur. And he remained in prison that night. And the maiden provided all that she had promised him.

And the next day Peredur heard a tumult in the town. "Tell me, fair maiden, what is that tumult?" said Peredur. "All the King's hosts and his forces have come to the town to-day." "And what seek they here?" he inquired. "There is an Earl near this place who possesses two Earldoms, and is as powerful as a King; and an engagement will take place between them to-day." "I beseech thee," said Peredur, "to cause a horse and arms to be brought, that I may view the encounter, and I promise to come back to my prison again." "Gladly," said she, "will I provide thee with horse and arms."

So she gave him a horse and arms, and a bright scarlet robe of honour over his armour, and a yellow shield upon his shoulder. And he went to the combat; and as many of the Earl's men as encountered him that day he overthrew; and he returned to his prison. And the maiden asked tidings of Peredur, and he answered her not a word. And she went and asked tidings of her father, and inquired who had acquitted himself best of the household. And he said that he knew not, but that it was a man with a scarlet robe of honour over his armour, and a yellow shield upon his shoulder. Then she smiled, and returned to where Peredur was, and did him great honour that night. And for three days did Peredur slay the Earl's men; and before any one could know who he was, he returned to his prison. And the fourth day Peredur slew the Earl himself. And the maiden went unto her father, and inquired of him the news. "I have good news for thee," said the King; "the Earl is slain, and I am the owner of his two Earldoms." "Knowest thou, lord, who slew him?" "I do not know," said the King. "It was the knight with the scarlet robe of honour and the yellow shield." "Lord," said she, "I know who that is." "By Heaven!" he exclaimed, "who is he?" "Lord," she replied, "he is the knight whom thou hast imprisoned." Then he went unto Peredur, and saluted him, and told him that he would reward the service he had done him, in any way he might desire. And when they went to meat, Peredur was placed beside the King, and the maiden on the other side of Peredur. "I will give thee," said the King, "my daughter in marriage, and half my kingdom with her, and the two Earldoms as a gift." "Heaven reward thee, lord," said Peredur, "but I came not here to woo." "What seekest thou then, chieftain?" "I am seeking tidings of the Castle of Wonders." "Thy enterprise is greater, chieftain, than thou wilt wish to pursue," said the maiden, "nevertheless, tidings shalt thou have of the Castle, and thou shalt have a guide through my father's dominions, and a sufficiency of provisions for thy journey, for thou art, O chieftain, the man whom best I love." Then she said to him, "Go over yonder mountain, and thou wilt find a lake, and in the middle of the lake there is a Castle, and that is the Castle that is called the Castle of Wonders; and we know not what wonders are therein, but thus is it called."

And Peredur proceeded towards the Castle, and the gate of the Castle was open. And when he came to the hall, the door was open, and he entered. And he beheld a chessboard in the hall, and the chessmen were playing against each other, by themselves. And the side that he favoured lost the game, and thereupon the others set up a shout, as though they had been living men. And Peredur was wroth, and took the chessmen in his lap, and cast the chessboard into the lake. And when he had done thus, behold the black maiden came in, and she said to him, "The welcome of Heaven be not unto thee. Thou hadst rather do evil than good." "What complaint hast thou against me, maiden?" said Peredur. "That thou hast occasioned unto the Empress the loss of her chessboard, which she would not have lost for all her empire. And the way in which thou mayest recover the chessboard is, to repair to the Castle of Ysbidinongyl, where is a black man, who lays waste the dominions of the Empress; and if thou canst slay him, thou wilt recover the chessboard. But if thou goest there, thou wilt not return alive." "Wilt thou direct me thither?" said Peredur. "I will show thee the way," she replied. So he went to the Castle of Ysbidinongyl, and he fought with the black man. And the black man besought mercy of Peredur. "Mercy will I grant thee," said he, "on condition that thou cause the chessboard to be restored to the place where it was when I entered the hall." Then the maiden came to him, and said, "The malediction of Heaven attend thee for thy work, since thou hast left that monster alive, who lays waste all the possessions of the Empress." "I granted him his life," said Peredur, "that he might cause the chessboard to be restored." "The chessboard is not in the place where thou didst find it; go back, therefore, and slay him," answered she. So Peredur went back, and slew the black man. And when he returned to the palace, he found the black maiden there. "Ah! maiden," said Peredur, "where is the Empress?" "I declare to Heaven that thou wilt not see her now, unless thou dost slay the monster that is in yonder forest." "What monster is there?" "It is a stag that is as swift as the swiftest bird; and he has one horn in his forehead, as long as the shaft of a spear, and as sharp as whatever is sharpest. And he destroys the branches of the best trees in the forest, and he kills every animal that he meets with therein; and those that



he doth not slay perish of hunger. And what is worse than that, he comes every night, and drinks up the fish-pond, and leaves the fishes exposed, so that for the most part they die before the water returns again.” “Maiden,” said Peredur, “wilt thou come and show me this animal?” “Not so,” said the maiden, “for he has not permitted any mortal to enter the forest for above a twelvemonth. Behold, here is a little dog belonging to the Empress, which will rouse the stag, and will chase him towards thee, and the stag will attack thee.” Then the little dog went as a guide to Peredur, and roused the stag, and brought him towards the place where Peredur was. And the stag attacked Peredur, and he let him pass by him, and as he did so, he smote off his head with his sword. And while he was looking at the head of the stag, he saw a lady on horseback coming towards him. And she took the little dog in the lappet of her cap, and the head and the body of the stag lay before her. And around the stag’s neck was a golden collar. “Ha! chieftain,” said she, “uncourteously hast thou acted in slaying the fairest jewel that was in my dominions.” “I was entreated so to do; and is there any way by which I can obtain thy friendship?” “There is,” she replied. “Go thou forward unto yonder mountain, and there thou wilt find a grove; and in the grove there is a cromlech; do thou there challenge a man three times to fight, and thou shalt have my friendship.”

So Peredur proceeded onward, and came to the side of the grove, and challenged any man to fight. And a black man arose from beneath the cromlech, mounted upon a bony horse, and both he and his horse were clad in huge rusty armour. And they fought. And as often as Peredur cast the black man to the earth, he would jump again into his saddle. And Peredur dismounted, and drew his sword; and thereupon the black man disappeared with Peredur’s horse and his own, so that he could not gain sight of him a second time. And Peredur went along the mountain, and on the other side of the mountain he beheld a castle in the valley, wherein was a river. And he went to the castle; and as he entered it, he saw a hall, and the door of the hall was open, and he went in. And there he saw a lame grey-headed man sitting on one side of the hall, with Gwalchmai beside him. And Peredur beheld his horse, which the black man had taken, in the same stall with that

of Gwalchmai. And they were glad concerning Peredur. And he went and seated himself on the other side of the hoary-headed man. Then, behold a yellow-haired youth came, and bent upon the knee before Peredur, and besought his friendship. "Lord," said the youth, "it was I that came in the form of the black maiden to Arthur's Court, and when thou didst throw down the chessboard, and when thou didst slay the black man of Ysbidinongyl, and when thou didst slay the stag, and when thou didst go to fight the black man of the cromlech. And I came with the bloody head in the salver, and with the lance that streamed with blood from the point to the hand, all along the shaft; and the head was thy cousin's, and he was killed by the sorceresses of Gloucester, who also lamed thine uncle; and I am thy cousin. And there is a prediction that thou art to avenge these things." Then Peredur and Gwalchmai took counsel, and sent to Arthur and his household, to beseech them to come against the sorceresses. And they began to fight with them; and one of the sorceresses slew one of Arthur's men before Peredur's face, and Peredur bade her forbear. And the sorceress slew a man before Peredur's face a second time, and a second time he forbad her. And the third time the sorceress slew a man before the face of Peredur; and then Peredur drew his sword, and smote the sorceress on the helmet; and all her head-armour was split in two parts. And she set up a cry, and desired the other sorceresses to flee, and told them that this was Peredur, the man who had learnt Chivalry with them, and by whom they were destined to be slain. Then Arthur and his household fell upon the sorceresses, and slew the sorceresses of Gloucester every one. And thus is it related concerning the Castle of Wonders.

# Geraint the Son of Erbin

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Arthur was accustomed to hold his Court at Caerlleon upon Usk. And there he held it seven Easters and five Christmases. And once upon a time he held his Court there at Whitsuntide. For Caerlleon was the place most easy of access in his dominions, both by sea and by land. And there were assembled nine crowned kings, who were his tributaries, and likewise earls and barons. For they were his invited guests at all the high festivals, unless they were prevented by any great hindrance. And when he was at Caerlleon, holding his Court, thirteen churches were set apart for mass. And thus were they appointed: one church for Arthur, and his kings, and his guests; and the second for Gwenhwyvar and her ladies; and the third for the Steward of the Household and the suitors; and the fourth for the Franks and the other officers; and the other nine churches were for the nine Masters of the Household and chiefly for Cwalchmai; for he, from the eminence of his warlike fame, and from the nobleness of his birth, was the most exalted of the nine. And there was no other arrangement respecting the churches than that which we have mentioned above.

Glewlwyd Gavaelvawr was the chief porter; but he did not himself perform the office, except at one of the three high festivals, for he had seven men to serve him, and they divided the year amongst them. They were Gryn, and Pen Pighon, and Llaes Cymyn, and Gogyfwlch, and Gwrdnei with cat's eyes, who could see as well by night as by day, and Drem the son of Dremhitid, and Clust the son of Clustveinyd; and these were Arthur's guards. And on Whit-Tuesday, as the King sat at the banquet, lo! there entered a tall, fair-headed youth, clad in a coat and a surcoat of diapered satin, and a golden-hilted sword about his neck, and low shoes of leather upon his feet. And he came, and stood before Arthur. "Hail to thee, Lord!" said he. "Heaven prosper thee," he answered, "and be thou welcome. Dost thou bring any new tidings?" "I do, Lord," he said. "I know thee not," said Arthur. "It is a marvel to me that thou dost not know me. I am one of thy

foresters, Lord, in the Forest of Dean, and my name is Madawc, the son of Twrgadarn.” “Tell me thine errand,” said Arthur. “I will do so, Lord,” said he. “In the Forest I saw a stag, the like of which beheld I never yet.” “What is there about him,” asked Arthur, “that thou never yet didst see his like?” “He is of pure white, Lord, and he does not herd with any other animal through stateliness and pride, so royal is his bearing. And I come to seek thy counsel, Lord, and to know thy will concerning him.” “It seems best to me,” said Arthur, “to go and hunt him to-morrow at break of day; and to cause general notice thereof to be given to-night in all quarters of the Court.” And Arryfuerys was Arthur’s chief huntsman, and Arelivri was his chief page. And all received notice; and thus it was arranged. And they sent the youth before them. Then Gwenhwyvar said to Arthur, “Wilt thou permit me, Lord,” said she, “to go to-morrow to see and hear the hunt of the stag of which the young man spoke?” “I will gladly,” said Arthur. “Then will I go,” said she. And Gwalchmai said to Arthur, “Lord, if it seem well to thee, permit that into whose hunt soever the stag shall come, that one, be he a knight, or one on foot, may cut off his head, and give it to whom he pleases, whether to his own lady-love, or to the lady of his friend.” “I grant it gladly,” said Arthur, “and let the Steward of the Household be chastised, if all are not ready to-morrow for the chase.”

And they passed the night with songs, and diversions, and discourse, and ample entertainment. And when it was time for them all to go to sleep, they went. And when the next day came, they arose; and Arthur called the attendants, who guarded his couch. And these were four pages, whose names were Cadyrnerth the son of Porthawr Gandwy, and Ambreu the son of Bedwor, and Amhar the son of Arthur, and Goreu the son of Custennin. And these men came to Arthur and saluted him, and arrayed him in his garments. And Arthur wondered that Gwenhwyvar did not awake, and did not move in her bed; and the attendants wished to awaken her. “Disturb her not,” said Arthur, “for she had rather sleep than go to see the hunting.”

Then Arthur went forth, and he heard two horns sounding, one from near the lodging of the chief huntsman, and the other from near that of the

chief page. And the whole assembly of the multitudes came to Arthur, and they took the road to the Forest.

And after Arthur had gone forth from the palace, Gwenhwyvar awoke, and called to her maidens, and apparelled herself. "Maidens," said she, "I had leave last night to go and see the hunt. Go one of you to the stable, and order hither a horse such as a woman may ride." And one of them went, and she found but two horses in the stable, and Gwenhwyvar and one of her maidens mounted them, and went through the Usk, and followed the track of the men and the horses. And as they rode thus, they heard a loud and rushing sound; and they looked behind them, and beheld a knight upon a hunter foal of mighty size; and the rider was a fair-haired youth, bare-legged, and of princely mien, and a golden-hilted sword was at his side, and a robe and a surcoat of satin were upon him, and two low shoes of leather upon his feet; and around him was a scarf of blue purple, at each corner of which was a golden apple. And his horse stepped stately, and swift, and proud; and he overtook Gwenhwyvar, and saluted her. "Heaven prosper thee, Geraint," said she, "I knew thee when first I saw thee just now. And the welcome of Heaven be unto thee. And why didst thou not go with thy lord to hunt?" "Because I knew not when he went," said he. "I marvel, too," said she, "how he could go unknown to me." "Indeed, lady," said he. "I was asleep, and knew not when he went; but thou, O young man, art the most agreeable companion I could have in the whole kingdom; and it may be, that I shall be more amused with the hunting than they; for we shall hear the horns when they sound, and we shall hear the dogs when they are let loose, and begin to cry." So they went to the edge of the Forest, and there they stood. "From this place," said she, "we shall hear when the dogs are let loose." And thereupon, they heard a loud noise, and they looked towards the spot whence it came, and they beheld a dwarf riding upon a horse, stately, and foaming, and prancing, and strong, and spirited. And in the hand of the dwarf was a whip. And near the dwarf they saw a lady upon a beautiful white horse, of steady and stately pace; and she was clothed in a garment of gold brocade. And near her was a knight upon a warhorse of large size, with heavy and bright armour both upon himself and upon his

horse. And truly they never before saw a knight, or a horse, or armour, of such remarkable size. And they were all near to each other.

“Geraint,” said Gwenhwyvar, “knowest thou the name of that tall knight yonder?” “I know him not,” said he, “and the strange armour that he wears prevents my either seeing his face or his features.” “Go, maiden,” said Gwenhwyvar, “and ask the dwarf who that knight is.” Then the maiden went up to the dwarf; and the dwarf waited for the maiden, when he saw her coming towards him. And the maiden inquired of the dwarf who the knight was. “I will not tell thee,” he answered. “Since thou art so churlish as not to tell me,” said she, “I will ask him himself.” “Thou shalt not ask him, by my faith,” said he. “Wherefore?” said she. “Because thou art not of honour sufficient to befit thee to speak to my Lord.” Then the maiden turned her horse’s head towards the knight, upon which the dwarf struck her with the whip that was in his hand across the face and the eyes, until the blood flowed forth. And the maiden, through the hurt she received from the blow, returned to Gwenhwyvar, complaining of the pain. “Very rudely has the dwarf treated thee,” said Geraint. “I will go myself to know who the knight is.” “Go,” said Gwenhwyvar. And Geraint went up to the dwarf. “Who is yonder knight?” said Geraint. “I will not tell thee,” said the dwarf. “Then will I ask him himself,” said he. “That wilt thou not, by my faith,” said the dwarf, “thou art not honourable enough to speak with my Lord.” Said Geraint, “I have spoken with men of equal rank with him.” And he turned his horse’s head towards the knight; but the dwarf overtook him, and struck him as he had done the maiden, so that the blood coloured the scarf that Geraint wore. Then Geraint put his hand upon the hilt of his sword, but he took counsel with himself, and considered that it would be no vengeance for him to slay the dwarf, and to be attacked unarmed by the armed knight, so he returned to where Gwenhwyvar was.

“Thou hast acted wisely and discreetly,” said she. “Lady,” said he, “I will follow him yet, with thy permission; and at last he will come to some inhabited place, where I may have arms either as a loan or for a pledge, so that I may encounter the knight.” “Go,” said she, “and do not attack him until thou hast good arms, and I shall be very anxious concerning thee, until

I hear tidings of thee.” “If I am alive,” said he, “thou shalt hear tidings of me by to-morrow afternoon;” and with that he departed.

And the road they took was below the palace of Caerlleon, and across the ford of the Usk; and they went along a fair, and even, and lofty ridge of ground, until they came to a town, and at the extremity of the town they saw a Fortress and a Castle. And they came to the extremity of the town. And as the knight passed through it, all the people arose, and saluted him, and bade him welcome. And when Geraint came into the town, he looked at every house, to see if he knew any of those whom he saw. But he knew none, and none knew him to do him the kindness to let him have arms either as a loan or for a pledge. And every house he saw was full of men, and arms, and horses. And they were polishing shields, and burnishing swords, and washing armour, and shoeing horses. And the knight, and the lady, and the dwarf rode up to the Castle that was in the town, and every one was glad in the Castle. And from the battlements and the gates they risked their necks, through their eagerness to greet them, and to show their joy.

Geraint stood there to see whether the knight would remain in the Castle; and when he was certain that he would do so, he looked around him; and at a little distance from the town he saw an old palace in ruins, wherein was a hall that was falling to decay. And as he knew not any one in the town, he went towards the old palace; and when he came near to the palace, he saw but one chamber, and a bridge of marble-stone leading to it. And upon the bridge he saw sitting a hoary-headed man, upon whom were tattered garments. And Geraint gazed steadfastly upon him for a long time. Then the hoary-headed man spoke to him. “Young man,” he said, “wherefore art thou thoughtful?” “I am thoughtful,” said he, “because I know not where to go to-night.” “Wilt thou come forward this way, chieftain?” said he, “and thou shalt have of the best that can be procured for thee.” So Geraint went forward. And the hoary-headed man preceded him into the hall. And in the hall he dismounted, and he left there his horse. Then he went on to the upper chamber with the hoary-headed man. And in the chamber he beheld an old decrepit woman, sitting on a cushion, with old, tattered garments of satin upon her; and it seemed to him that he had

never seen a woman fairer than she must have been, when in the fulness of youth. And beside her was a maiden, upon whom were a vest and a veil, that were old, and beginning to be worn out. And truly, he never saw a maiden more full of comeliness, and grace, and beauty than she. And the hoary-headed man said to the maiden, "There is no attendant for the horse of this youth but thyself." "I will render the best service I am able," said she, "both to him and to his horse." And the maiden disarrayed the youth, and then she furnished his horse with straw and with corn. And she went to the hall as before, and then she returned to the chamber. And the hoary-headed man said to the maiden, "Go to the town," said he, "and bring hither the best that thou canst find both of food and of liquor." "I will, gladly, Lord," said she. And to the town went the maiden. And they conversed together while the maiden was at the town. And, behold! the maiden came back, and a youth with her, bearing on his back a costrel full of good purchased mead, and a quarter of a young bullock. And in the hands of the maiden was a quantity of white bread, and she had some manchet bread in her veil, and she came into the chamber. "I could not obtain better than this," said she, "nor with better should I have been trusted." "It is good enough," said Geraint. And they caused the meat to be boiled; and when their food was ready, they sat down. And it was on this wise; Geraint sat between the hoary-headed man and his wife, and the maiden served them. And they ate and drank.

And when they had finished eating, Geraint talked with the hoary-headed man, and he asked him in the first place, to whom belonged the palace that he was in. "Truly," said he, "it was I that built it, and to me also belonged the city and the castle which thou sawest." "Alas!" said Geraint, "how is it that thou hast lost them now?" "I lost a great Earldom as well as these," said he; "and this is how I lost them. I had a nephew, the son of my brother, and I took his possessions to myself; and when he came to his strength, he demanded of me his property, but I withheld it from him. So he made war upon me, and wrested from me all that I possessed." "Good Sir," said Geraint, "wilt thou tell me wherefore came the knight, and the lady, and the dwarf, just now into the town, and what is the preparation which I



saw, and the putting of arms in order?" "I will do so," said he. "The preparations are for the game that is to be held to-morrow by the young Earl, which will be on this wise. In the midst of a meadow which is here, two forks will be set up, and upon the two forks a silver rod, and upon the silver rod a Sparrow-Hawk, and for the Sparrow-Hawk there will be a tournament. And to the tournament will go all the array thou didst see in the city, of men, and of horses, and of arms. And with each man will go the lady he loves best; and no man can joust for the Sparrow-Hawk, except the lady he loves best be with him. And the knight that thou sawest has gained the Sparrow-Hawk these two years; and if he gains it the third year, they will, from that time, send it every year to him, and he himself will come here no more. And he will be called the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk from that time forth." "Sir," said Geraint, "what is thy counsel to me concerning this knight, on account of the insult which I received from the dwarf, and that which was received by the maiden of Gwenhwyvar, the wife of Arthur?" And Geraint told the hoary-headed man what the insult was that he had received. "It is not easy to counsel thee, inasmuch as thou hast neither dame nor maiden belonging to thee, for whom thou canst joust. Yet, I have arms here, which thou couldest have; and there is my horse also, if he seem to thee better than thine own." "Ah! Sir," said he, "Heaven reward thee. But my own horse, to which I am accustomed, together with thy arms, will suffice me. And if, when the appointed time shall come to-morrow, thou wilt permit me, Sir, to challenge for yonder maiden that is thy daughter, I will engage, if I escape from the tournament, to love the maiden as long as I live; and if I do not escape, she will remain unsullied as before." "Gladly will I permit thee," said the hoary-headed man, "and since thou dost thus resolve, it is necessary that thy horse and arms should be ready to-morrow at break of day. For then the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk will make proclamation, and ask the lady he loves best to take the Sparrow-Hawk. 'For,' will he say to her, 'thou art the fairest of women, and thou didst possess it last year, and the year previous; and if any deny it thee to-day, by force will I defend it for thee.' And therefore," said the hoary-

headed man, "it is needful for thee to be there at daybreak; and we three will be with thee." And thus was it settled.

And at night, lo! they went to sleep; and before the dawn they arose, and arrayed themselves; and by the time that it was day, they were all four in the meadow. And there was the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk making the proclamation, and asking his lady-love to fetch the Sparrow-Hawk. "Fetch it not," said Geraint, "for there is here a maiden, who is fairer, and more noble, and more comely, and who has a better claim to it than thou." "If thou maintainest the Sparrow-Hawk to be due to her, come forward, and do battle with me." And Geraint went forward to the top of the meadow, having upon himself and upon his horse armour which was heavy, and rusty, and worthless, and of uncouth shape. Then they encountered each other, and they broke a set of lances, and they broke a second set, and a third. And thus they did at every onset, and they broke as many lances as were brought to them. And when the Earl and his company saw the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk gaining the mastery, there was shouting, and joy, and mirth amongst them. And the hoary-headed man, and his wife, and his daughter were sorrowful. And the hoary-headed man served Geraint lances as often as he broke them, and the dwarf served the Knight of the Sparrow-Hawk. Then the hoary-headed man came to Geraint. "Oh! chieftain," said he, "since no other will hold with thee, behold, here is the lance which was in my hand on the day when I received the honour of knighthood; and from that time to this I never broke it. And it has an excellent point." Then Geraint took the lance, thanking the hoary-headed man. And thereupon the dwarf also brought a lance to his lord. "Behold, here is a lance for thee, not less good than his," said the dwarf. "And bethink thee, that no knight ever withstood thee before so long as this one has done." "I declare to Heaven," said Geraint, "that unless death takes me quickly hence, he shall fare never the better for thy service." And Geraint pricked his horse towards him from afar, and warning him, he rushed upon him, and gave him a blow so severe, and furious, and fierce, upon the face of his shield, that he cleft it in two, and broke his armour, and burst his girths, so that both he and his saddle were borne to the ground over the horse's crupper. And Geraint dismounted

quickly. And he was wroth, and he drew his sword, and rushed fiercely upon him. Then the knight also arose, and drew his sword against Geraint. And they fought on foot with their swords until their arms struck sparks of fire like stars from one another; and thus they continued fighting until the blood and sweat obscured the light from their eyes. And when Geraint prevailed, the hoary-headed man, and his wife, and his daughter were glad; and when the knight prevailed, it rejoiced the Earl and his party. Then the hoary-headed man saw Geraint receive a severe stroke, and he went up to him quickly, and said to him, "Oh, chieftain, remember the treatment which thou hadst from the dwarf; and wilt thou not seek vengeance for the insult to thyself, and for the insult to Gwenhwyvar the wife of Arthur!" And Geraint was roused by what he said to him, and he called to him all his strength, and lifted up his sword, and struck the knight upon the crown of his head, so that he broke all his head-armour, and cut through all the flesh and the skin, even to the skull, until he wounded the bone.

Then the knight fell upon his knees, and cast his sword from his hand, and besought mercy of Geraint. "Of a truth," said he, "I relinquish my overbearing and my pride in craving thy mercy; and unless I have time to commit myself to Heaven for my sins, and to talk with a priest, thy mercy will avail me little." "I will grant thee grace upon this condition," said Geraint, "that thou wilt go to Gwenhwyvar the wife of Arthur, to do her satisfaction for the insult which her maiden received from thy dwarf. As to myself, for the insult which I received from thee and thy dwarf, I am content with that which I have done unto thee. Dismount not from the time thou goest hence until thou comest into the presence of Gwenhwyvar, to make her what atonement shall be adjudged at the Court of Arthur." "This will I do gladly. And who art thou?" said he. "I am Geraint the son of Erbin. And declare thou also who thou art." "I am Edeyrn the son of Nudd." Then he threw himself upon his horse, and went forward to Arthur's Court, and the lady he loved best went before him and the dwarf, with much lamentation. And thus far this story up to that time.

Then came the little Earl and his hosts to Geraint, and saluted him, and bade him to his castle. "I may not go," said Geraint, "but where I was last

night, there will I be to-night also.” “Since thou wilt none of my inviting, thou shalt have abundance of all that I can command for thee, in the place thou wast last night. And I will order ointment for thee, to recover thee from thy fatigues, and from the weariness that is upon thee.” “Heaven reward thee,” said Geraint, “and I will go to my lodging.” And thus went Geraint, and Earl Ynywl, and his wife, and his daughter. And when they reached the chamber, the household servants and attendants of the young Earl had arrived at the Court, and they arranged all the houses, dressing them with straw and with fire; and in a short time the ointment was ready, and Geraint came there, and they washed his head. Then came the young Earl, with forty honourable knights from among his attendants, and those who were bidden to the tournament. And Geraint came from the anointing. And the Earl asked him to go to the hall to eat. “Where is the Earl Ynywl,” said Geraint, “and his wife, and his daughter?” “They are in the chamber yonder,” said the Earl’s chamberlain, “arraying themselves in garments which the Earl has caused to be brought for them.” “Let not the damsel array herself,” said he, “except in her vest and her veil, until she come to the Court of Arthur, to be clad by Gwenhwyvar in such garments as she may choose.” So the maiden did not array herself.

Then they all entered the hall, and they washed, and went, and sat down to meat. And thus were they seated. On one side of Geraint sat the young Earl, and Earl Ynywl beyond him; and on the other side of Geraint were the maiden and her mother. And after these all sat according to their precedence in honour. And they ate. And they were served abundantly, and they received a profusion of divers kind of gifts. Then they conversed together. And the young Earl invited Geraint to visit him next day. “I will not, by Heaven,” said Geraint. “To the Court of Arthur will I go with this maiden to-morrow. And it is enough for me, as long as Earl Ynywl is in poverty and trouble; and I go chiefly to seek to add to his maintenance.” “Ah, chieftain,” said the young Earl, “it is not by my fault that Earl Ynywl is without his possessions.” “By my faith,” said Geraint, “he shall not remain without them, unless death quickly takes me hence.” “Oh, chieftain,” said he, “with regard to the disagreement between me and Ynywl, I will gladly abide by

thy counsel, and agree to what thou mayest judge right between us.” “I but ask thee,” said Geraint, “to restore to him what is his, and what he should have received from the time he lost his possessions, even until this day.” “That I will do gladly, for thee,” answered he. “Then,” said Geraint, “whosoever is here who owes homage to Ynywl, let him come forward, and perform it on the spot.” And all the men did so. And by that treaty they abided. And his castle, and his town, and all his possessions were restored to Ynywl. And he received back all that he had lost, even to the smallest jewel.

Then spoke Earl Ynywl to Geraint. “Chieftain,” said he, “behold the maiden for whom thou didst challenge at the tournament, I bestow her upon thee.” “She shall go with me,” said Geraint, “to the Court of Arthur; and Arthur and Gwenhwyvar they shall dispose of her as they will.” And the next day they proceeded to Arthur’s Court. So far concerning Geraint.

Now, this is how Arthur hunted the stag. The men and the dogs were divided into hunting parties, and the dogs were let loose upon the stag. And the last dog that was let loose was the favourite dog of Arthur. Cavall was his name. And he left all the other dogs behind him, and turned the stag. And at the second turn, the stag came towards the hunting party of Arthur. And Arthur set upon him. And before he could be slain by any other, Arthur cut off his head. Then they sounded the death horn for slaying, and they all gathered round.

Then came Kadyrieith to Arthur, and spoke to him. “Lord,” said he, “behold, yonder is Gwenhwyvar, and none with her save only one maiden.” “Command Gildas the son of Caw, and all the scholars of the Court,” said Arthur, “to attend Gwenhwyvar to the palace.” And they did so.

Then they all set forth, holding converse together concerning the head of the stag, to whom it should be given. One wished that it should be given to the lady best beloved by him, and another to the lady whom he loved best. And all they of the household, and the knights, disputed sharply concerning the head. And with that they came to the palace. And when Arthur and Gwenhwyvar heard them disputing about the head of the stag, Gwenhwyvar said to Arthur, “My lord, this is my counsel concerning the

stag's head; let it not be given away until Geraint the son of Erbin shall return from the errand he is upon." And Gwenhwyvar told Arthur what that errand was. "Right gladly shall it be so," said Arthur. And thus it was settled. And the next day Gwenhwyvar caused a watch to be set upon the ramparts for Geraint's coming. And after mid-day they beheld an unshapely little man upon a horse, and after him, as they supposed, a dame or a damsel, also on horseback, and after her a knight of large stature, bowed down, and hanging his head low and sorrowfully, and clad in broken and worthless armour.

And before they came near to the gate, one of the watch went to Gwenhwyvar, and told her what kind of people they saw, and what aspect they bore. "I know not who they are," said he. "But I know," said Gwenhwyvar; "this is the knight whom Geraint pursued, and methinks that he comes not here by his own free will. But Geraint has overtaken him, and avenged the insult to the maiden to the uttermost." And thereupon, behold a porter came to the spot where Gwenhwyvar was. "Lady," said he, "at the gate there is a knight, and I saw never a man of so pitiful an aspect to look upon as he. Miserable and broken is the armour that he wears, and the hue of blood is more conspicuous upon it than its own colour." "Knowest thou his name?" said she. "I do," said he; "he tells me that he is Edeyrn the son of Nudd." Then she replied, "I know him not."

So Gwenhwyvar went to the gate to meet him, and he entered. And Gwenhwyvar was sorry when she saw the condition he was in, even though he was accompanied by the churlish dwarf. Then Edeyrn saluted Gwenhwyvar. "Heaven protect thee," said she. "Lady," said he, "Geraint the son of Erbin, thy best and most valiant servant, greets thee." "Did he meet thee?" she asked. "Yes," said he, "and it was not to my advantage; and that was not his fault, but mine, Lady. And Geraint greets thee well; and in greeting thee he compelled me to come hither to do thy pleasure for the insult which thy maiden received from the dwarf. He forgives the insult to himself, in consideration of his having put me in peril of my life. And he imposed on me a condition, manly, and honourable, and warrior-like, which was to do thee justice, Lady." "Now, where did he overtake thee?" "At the

place where we were jousting, and contending for the Sparrow-Hawk, in the town which is now called Cardiff. And there were none with him save three persons, of a mean and tattered condition. And these were an aged, hoary-headed man, and a woman advanced in years, and a fair young maiden, clad in worn-out garments. And it was for the avouchment of the love of that maiden that Geraint jousted for the Sparrow-Hawk at the tournament, for he said that that maiden was better entitled to the Sparrow-Hawk than this maiden who was with me. And thereupon we encountered each other, and he left me, Lady, as thou seest.” “Sir,” said she, “when thinkest thou that Geraint will be here?” “To-morrow, Lady, I think he will be here with the maiden.”

Then Arthur came to him, and he saluted Arthur; and Arthur gazed a long time upon him, and was amazed to see him thus. And thinking that he knew him, he inquired of him, “Art thou Edeyrn the son of Nudd?” “I am, Lord,” said he, “and I have met with much trouble, and received wounds unsupportable.” Then he told Arthur all his adventure. “Well,” said Arthur, “from what I hear, it behoves Gwenhwyvar to be merciful towards thee.” “The mercy which thou desirest, Lord,” said she, “will I grant to him, since it is as insulting to thee that an insult should be offered to me as to thyself.” “Thus will it be best to do,” said Arthur; “let this man have medical care until it be known whether he may live. And if he live, he shall do such satisfaction as shall be judged best by the men of the Court; and take thou sureties to that effect. And if he die, too much will be the death of such a youth as Edeyrn for an insult to a maiden.” “This pleases me,” said Gwenhwyvar. And Arthur became surety for Edeyrn, and Caradawc the son of Llyr, Gwallawg the son of Llenawg, and Owain the son of Nudd, and Gwalchmai, and many others with them. And Arthur caused Morgan Tud to be called to him. He was the chief physician. “Take with thee Edeyrn the son of Nudd, and cause a chamber to be prepared for him, and let him have the aid of medicine as thou wouldst do unto myself, if I were wounded, and let none into his chamber to molest him, but thyself and thy disciples, to administer to him remedies.” “I will do so gladly, Lord,” said Morgan Tud. Then said the steward of the household, “Whither is it right, Lord, to order

the maiden?" "To Gwenhwyvar and her handmaidens," said he. And the steward of the household so ordered her. Thus far concerning them.

The next day came Geraint towards the Court; and there was a watch set on the ramparts by Gwenhwyvar, lest he should arrive unawares. And one of the watch came to the place where Gwenhwyvar was. "Lady," said he, "methinks that I see Geraint, and the maiden with him. He is on horseback, but he has his walking gear upon him, and the maiden appears to be in white, seeming to be clad in a garment of linen." "Assemble all the women," said Gwenhwyvar, "and come to meet Geraint, to welcome him, and wish him joy." And Gwenhwyvar went to meet Geraint and the maiden. And when Geraint came to the place where Gwenhwyvar was, he saluted her. "Heaven prosper thee," said she, "and welcome to thee. And thy career has been successful, and fortunate, and resistless, and glorious. And Heaven reward thee, that thou hast so proudly caused me to have retribution." "Lady," said he, "I earnestly desired to obtain thee satisfaction according to thy will; and, behold, here is the maiden through whom thou hadst thy revenge." "Verily," said Gwenhwyvar, "the welcome of Heaven be unto her; and it is fitting that we should receive her joyfully." Then they went in, and dismounted. And Geraint came to where Arthur was, and saluted him. "Heaven protect thee," said Arthur, "and the welcome of Heaven be unto thee. And since Edeyrn the son of Nudd has received his overthrow and wounds from thy hands, thou hast had a prosperous career." "Not upon me be the blame," said Geraint, "it was through the arrogance of Edeyrn the son of Nudd himself that we were not friends. I would not quit him until I knew who he was, and until the one had vanquished the other." "Now," said Arthur, "where is the maiden for whom I heard thou didst give challenge?" "She is gone with Gwenhwyvar to her chamber."

Then went Arthur to see the maiden. And Arthur, and all his companions, and his whole Court, were glad concerning the maiden. And certain were they all, that had her array been suitable to her beauty, they had never seen a maid fairer than she. And Arthur gave away the maiden to Geraint. And the usual bond made between two persons was made between Geraint and the maiden, and the choicest of all Gwenhwyvar's apparel was



given to the maiden; and thus arrayed, she appeared comely and graceful to all who beheld her. And that day and that night were spent in abundance of minstrelsy, and ample gifts of liquor, and a multitude of games. And when it was time for them to go to sleep, they went. And in the chamber where the couch of Arthur and Gwenhwyvar was, the couch of Geraint and Enid was prepared. And from that time she became his bride. And the next day Arthur satisfied all the claimants upon Geraint with bountiful gifts. And the maiden took up her abode in the palace; and she had many companions, both men and women, and there was no maiden more esteemed than she in the Island of Britain.

Then spake Gwenhwyvar. "Rightly did I judge," said she, "concerning the head of the stag, that it should not be given to any until Geraint's return; and, behold, here is a fit occasion for bestowing it. Let it be given to Enid the daughter of Ynywl, the most illustrious maiden. And I do not believe that any will begrudge it her, for between her and every one here there exists nothing but love and friendship." Much applauded was this by them all, and by Arthur also. And the head of the stag was given to Enid. And thereupon her fame increased, and her friends thenceforward became more in number than before. And Geraint from that time forth loved the stag, and the tournament, and hard encounters; and he came victorious from them all. And a year, and a second, and a third, he proceeded thus, until his fame had flown over the face of the kingdom.

And once upon a time Arthur was holding his Court at Caerlleon upon Usk, at Whitsuntide. And, behold, there came to him ambassadors, wise and prudent, full of knowledge, and eloquent of speech, and they saluted Arthur. "Heaven prosper you," said Arthur, "and the welcome of Heaven be unto you. And whence do you come?" "We come, Lord," said they, "from Cornwall; and we are ambassadors from Erbin the son of Custennin, thy uncle, and our mission is unto thee. And he greets thee well, as an uncle should greet his nephew, and as a vassal should greet his lord. And he represents unto thee that he waxes heavy and feeble, and is advancing in years. And the neighbouring chiefs, knowing this, grow insolent towards him, and covet his land and possessions. And he earnestly beseeches thee,

Lord, to permit Geraint his son to return to him, to protect his possessions, and to become acquainted with his boundaries. And unto him he represents that it were better for him to spend the flower of his youth and the prime of his age in preserving his own boundaries, than in tournaments, which are productive of no profit, although he obtains glory in them.”

“Well,” said Arthur, “go, and divest yourselves of your accoutrements, and take food, and refresh yourselves after your fatigues; and before you go forth hence you shall have an answer.” And they went to eat. And Arthur considered that it would go hard with him to let Geraint depart from him and from his Court; neither did he think it fair that his cousin should be restrained from going to protect his dominions and his boundaries, seeing that his father was unable to do so. No less was the grief and regret of Gwenhwyvar, and all her women, and all her damsels, through fear that the maiden would leave them. And that day and that night were spent in abundance of feasting. And Arthur showed Geraint the cause of the mission, and of the coming of the ambassadors to him out of Cornwall. “Truly,” said Geraint, “be it to my advantage or disadvantage, Lord, I will do according to thy will concerning this embassy.” “Behold,” said Arthur, “though it grieves me to part with thee, it is my counsel that thou go to dwell in thine own dominions, and to defend thy boundaries, and to take with thee to accompany thee as many as thou wilt of those thou lovest best among my faithful ones, and among thy friends, and among thy companions in arms.” “Heaven reward thee; and this will I do,” said Geraint. “What discourse,” said Gwenhwyvar, “do I hear between you? Is it of those who are to conduct Geraint to his country?” “It is,” said Arthur. “Then it is needful for me to consider,” said she, “concerning companions and a provision for the lady that is with me?” “Thou wilt do well,” said Arthur.

And that night they went to sleep. And the next day the ambassadors were permitted to depart, and they were told that Geraint should follow them. And on the third day Geraint set forth, and many went with him. Gwalchmai the son of Gwyar, and Riogonedd the son of the king of Ireland, and Ondyaw the son of the duke of Burgundy, Gwilim the son of the ruler of the Franks, Howel the son of Emyr of Brittany, Elivry, and Nawkyrd,

Gwynn the son of Tringad, Goreu the son of Custennin, Gweir Gwrhyd Vawr, Garannaw the son of Golithmer, Peredur the son of Evrawc, Gwynnlllogell, Gwyr a judge in the Court of Arthur, Dyvyr the son of Alun of Dyved, Gwrei Gwalstawd Ieithoedd, Bedwyr the son of Bedrawd, Hadwry the son of Gwryon, Kai the son of Kynyr, Odyar the Frank, the Steward of Arthur's Court, and Edeyrn the son of Nudd. Said Geraint, "I think that I shall have enough of knighthood with me." "Yes," said Arthur, "but it will not be fitting for thee to take Edeyrn with thee, although he is well, until peace shall be made between him and Gwenhwyvar." "Gwenhwyvar can permit him to go with me, if he give sureties." "If she please, she can let him go without sureties, for enough of pain and affliction has he suffered for the insult which the maiden received from the dwarf." "Truly," said Gwenhwyvar, "since it seems well to thee and to Geraint, I will do this gladly, Lord." Then she permitted Edeyrn freely to depart. And many there were who accompanied Geraint, and they set forth; and never was there seen a fairer host journeying towards the Severn. And on the other side of the Severn were the nobles of Erbin the son of Custennin, and his foster-father at their head, to welcome Geraint with gladness; and many of the women of the Court, with his mother, came to receive Enid the daughter of Ynywl, his wife. And there was great rejoicing and gladness throughout the whole Court, and throughout all the country, concerning Geraint, because of the greatness of their love towards him, and of the greatness of the fame which he had gained since he went from amongst them, and because he was come to take possession of his dominions and to preserve his boundaries. And they came to the Court. And in the Court they had ample entertainment, and a multitude of gifts and abundance of liquor, and a sufficiency of service, and a variety of minstrelsy and of games. And to do honour to Geraint, all the chief men of the country were invited that night to visit him. And they passed that day and that night in the utmost enjoyment. And at dawn next day Erbin arose, and summoned to him Geraint, and the noble persons who had borne him company. And he said to Geraint, "I am a feeble and aged man, and whilst I was able to maintain the dominion for thee and for myself, I did so. But thou art young, and in the

flower of thy vigour and of thy youth; henceforth do thou preserve thy possessions.” “Truly,” said Geraint, “with my consent thou shalt not give the power over thy dominions at this time into my hands, and thou shalt not take me from Arthur’s Court.” “Into thy hands will I give them,” said Erbin, “and this day also shalt thou receive the homage of thy subjects.”

Then said Gwalchmai, “It were better for thee to satisfy those who have boons to ask, to-day, and to-morrow thou canst receive the homage of thy dominions.” So all that had boons to ask were summoned into one place. And Kadyrieith came to them, to know what were their requests. And every one asked that which he desired. And the followers of Arthur began to make gifts, and immediately the men of Cornwall came, and gave also. And they were not long in giving, so eager was every one to bestow gifts. And of those who came to ask gifts, none departed unsatisfied. And that day and that night were spent in the utmost enjoyment.

And the next day, at dawn, Erbin desired Geraint to send messengers to the men, to ask them whether it was displeasing to them that he should come to receive their homage, and whether they had anything to object to him. Then Geraint sent ambassadors to the men of Cornwall, to ask them this. And they all said that it would be the fulness of joy and honour to them for Geraint to come and receive their homage. So he received the homage of such as were there. And they remained with him till the third night. And the day after the followers of Arthur intended to go away. “It is too soon for you to go away yet,” said he, “stay with me until I have finished receiving the homage of my chief men, who have agreed to come to me.” And they remained with him until he had done so. Then they set forth towards the Court of Arthur; and Geraint went to bear them company, and Enid also, as far as Diganhwy: there they parted. Then Ondyaw the son of the duke of Burgundy said to Geraint, “Go first of all and visit the uppermost parts of thy dominions, and see well to the boundaries of thy territories; and if thou hast any trouble respecting them, send unto thy companions.” “Heaven reward thee,” said Geraint, “and this will I do.” And Geraint journeyed to the uttermost part of his dominions. And experienced guides, and the chief

men of his country, went with him. And the furthestmost point that they showed him he kept possession of.

And, as he had been used to do when he was at Arthur's Court, he frequented tournaments. And he became acquainted with valiant and mighty men, until he had gained as much fame there as he had formerly done elsewhere. And he enriched his Court, and his companions, and his nobles, with the best horses and the best arms, and with the best and most valuable jewels, and he ceased not until his fame had flown over the face of the whole kingdom. And when he knew that it was thus, he began to love ease and pleasure, for there was no one who was worth his opposing. And he loved his wife, and liked to continue in the palace, with minstrelsy and diversions. And for a long time he abode at home. And after that he began to shut himself up in the chamber of his wife, and he took no delight in anything besides, insomuch that he gave up the friendship of his nobles, together with his hunting and his amusements, and lost the hearts of all the host in his Court; and there was murmuring and scoffing concerning him among the inhabitants of the palace, on account of his relinquishing so completely their companionship for the love of his wife. And these tidings came to Erbin. And when Erbin had heard these things, he spoke unto Enid, and inquired of her whether it was she that had caused Geraint to act thus, and to forsake his people and his hosts. "Not I, by my confession unto Heaven," said she, "there is nothing more hateful to me than this." And she knew not what she should do, for, although it was hard for her to own this to Geraint, yet was it not more easy for her to listen to what she heard, without warning Geraint concerning it. And she was very sorrowful.

And one morning in the summer time, they were upon their couch, and Geraint lay upon the edge of it. And Enid was without sleep in the apartment, which had windows of glass. And the sun shone upon the couch. And the clothes had slipped from off his arms and his breast, and he was asleep. Then she gazed upon the marvellous beauty of his appearance, and she said, "Alas, and am I the cause that these arms and this breast have lost their glory and the warlike fame which they once so richly enjoyed!" And as she said this, the tears dropped from her eyes, and they fell upon his

breast. And the tears she shed, and the words she had spoken, awoke him; and another thing contributed to awaken him, and that was the idea that it was not in thinking of him that she spoke thus, but that it was because she loved some other man more than him, and that she wished for other society, and thereupon Geraint was troubled in his mind, and he called his squire; and when he came to him, "Go quickly," said he, "and prepare my horse and my arms, and make them ready. And do thou arise," said he to Enid, "and apparel thyself; and cause thy horse to be accoutred, and clothe thee in the worst riding-dress that thou hast in thy possession. And evil betide me," said he, "if thou returnest here until thou knowest whether I have lost my strength so completely as thou didst say. And if it be so, it will then be easy for thee to seek the society thou didst wish for of him of whom thou wast thinking." So she arose, and clothed herself in her meanest garments. "I know nothing, Lord," said she, "of thy meaning." "Neither wilt thou know at this time," said he.

Then Geraint went to see Erbin. "Sir," said he, "I am going upon a quest, and I am not certain when I may come back. Take heed, therefore, unto thy possessions, until my return." "I will do so," said he, "but it is strange to me that thou shouldest go so suddenly. And who will proceed with thee, since thou art not strong enough to traverse the land of Lloegyr alone?" "But one person only will go with me." "Heaven counsel thee, my son," said Erbin, "and may many attach themselves to thee in Lloegyr." Then went Geraint to the place where his horse was, and it was equipped with foreign armour, heavy and shining. And he desired Enid to mount her horse, and to ride forward, and to keep a long way before him. "And whatever thou mayest see, and whatever thou mayest hear concerning me," said he, "do thou not turn back. And unless I speak unto thee, say not thou one word either." And they set forward. And he did not choose the pleasantest and most frequented road, but that which was the wildest and most beset by thieves, and robbers, and venomous animals. And they came to a high road, which they followed till they saw a vast forest, and they went towards it, and they saw four armed horsemen come forth from the forest. When the horsemen had beheld them, one of them said to the others,

“Behold, here is a good occasion for us to capture two horses and armour, and a lady likewise; for this we shall have no difficulty in doing against yonder single knight, who hangs his head so pensively and heavily.” And Enid heard this discourse, and she knew not what she should do through fear of Geraint, who had told her to be silent. “The vengeance of Heaven be upon me,” she said, “if I would not rather receive my death from his hand than from the hand of any other; and though he should slay me yet will I speak to him, lest I should have the misery to witness his death.” So she waited for Geraint until he came near to her. “Lord,” said she, “didst thou hear the words of those men concerning thee?” Then he lifted up his eyes, and looked at her angrily. “Thou hadst only,” said he, “to hold thy peace as I bade thee. I wish but for silence, and not for warning. And though thou shouldest desire to see my defeat and my death by the hands of those men, yet do I feel no dread.” Then the foremost of them couched his lance, and rushed upon Geraint. And he received him, and that not feebly. But he let the thrust go by him, while he struck the horseman upon the centre of his shield in such a manner that his shield was split, and his armour broken, and so that a cubit’s length of the shaft of Geraint’s lance passed through his body, and sent him to the earth, the length of the lance over his horse’s crupper. Then the second horseman attacked him furiously, being wroth at the death of his companion. But with one thrust Geraint overthrew him also, and killed him as he had done the other. Then the third set upon him, and he killed him in like manner. And thus also he slew the fourth. Sad and sorrowful was the maiden as she saw all this. Geraint dismounted from his horse, and took the arms of the men he had slain, and placed them upon their saddles, and tied together the reins of their horses, and he mounted his horse again. “Behold what thou must do,” said he; “take the four horses, and drive them before thee, and proceed forward, as I bade thee just now. And say not one word unto me, unless I speak first unto thee. And I declare unto Heaven,” said he, “if thou doest not thus, it will be to thy cost.” “I will do, as far as I can, Lord,” said she, “according to thy desire.” Then they went forward through the forest; and when they left the forest, they came to a vast plain, in the centre of which was a group of thickly tangled copse-

wood; and from out thereof they beheld three horsemen coming towards them, well equipped with armour, both they and their horses. Then the maiden looked steadfastly upon them; and when they had come near, she heard them say one to another, "Behold, here is a good arrival for us; here are coming for us four horses and four suits of armour. We shall easily obtain them spite of yonder dolorous knight, and the maiden also will fall into our power." "This is but too true," said she to herself, "for my husband is tired with his former combat. The vengeance of Heaven will be upon me, unless I warn him of this." So the maiden waited until Geraint came up to her. "Lord," said she, "dost thou not hear the discourse of yonder men concerning thee?" "What was it?" asked he. "They say to one another, that they will easily obtain all this spoil." "I declare to Heaven," he answered, "that their words are less grievous to me than that thou wilt not be silent, and abide by my counsel." "My Lord," said she, "I feared lest they should surprise thee unawares." "Hold thy peace, then," said he, "do not I desire silence?" And thereupon one of the horsemen couched his lance, and attacked Geraint. And he made a thrust at him, which he thought would be very effective; but Geraint received it carelessly, and struck it aside, and then he rushed upon him, and aimed at the centre of his person, and from the shock of man and horse, the quantity of his armour did not avail him, and the head of the lance and part of the shaft passed through him, so that he was carried to the ground an arm and a spear's length over the crupper of his horse. And both the other horsemen came forward in their turn, but their onset was not more successful than that of their companion. And the maiden stood by, looking at all this; and on the one hand she was in trouble lest Geraint should be wounded in his encounter with the men, and on the other hand she was joyful to see him victorious. Then Geraint dismounted, and bound the three suits of armour upon the three saddles, and he fastened the reins of all the horses together, so that he had seven horses with him. And he mounted his own horse, and commanded the maiden to drive forward the others. "It is no more use for me to speak to thee than to refrain, for thou wilt not attend to my advice." "I will do so, as far as I am able, Lord," said she; "but I cannot conceal from thee the fierce and threatening



words which I may hear against thee, Lord, from such strange people as those that haunt this wilderness.” “I declare to Heaven,” said he, “that I desire nought but silence; therefore, hold thy peace.” “I will, Lord, while I can.” And the maiden went on with the horses before her, and she pursued her way straight onwards. And from the copse-wood already mentioned, they journeyed over a vast and dreary open plain. And at a great distance from them they beheld a wood, and they could see neither end nor boundary to the wood, except on that side that was nearest to them, and they went towards it. Then there came from out the wood five horsemen, eager, and bold, and mighty, and strong, mounted upon chargers that were powerful, and large of bone, and high-mettled, and proudly snorting, and both the men and the horses were well equipped with arms. And when they drew near to them, Enid heard them say, “Behold, here is a fine booty coming to us, which we shall obtain easily and without labour, for we shall have no trouble in taking all those horses and arms, and the lady also, from yonder single knight, so doleful and sad.”

Sorely grieved was the maiden upon hearing this discourse, so that she knew not in the world what she should do. At last, however, she determined to warn Geraint; so she turned her horse’s head towards him. “Lord,” said she, “if thou hadst heard as I did what yonder horsemen said concerning thee, thy heaviness would be greater than it is.” Angrily and bitterly did Geraint smile upon her, and he said, “Thee do I hear doing everything that I forbade thee; but it may be that thou will repent this yet.” And immediately, behold, the men met them, and victoriously and gallantly did Geraint overcome them all five. And he placed the five suits of armour upon the five saddles, and tied together the reins of the twelve horses, and gave them in charge to Enid. “I know not,” said he, “what good it is for me to order thee; but this time I charge thee in an especial manner.” So the maiden went forward towards the wood, keeping in advance of Geraint, as he had desired her; and it grieved him as much as his wrath would permit, to see a maiden so illustrious as she having so much trouble with the care of the horses. Then they reached the wood, and it was both deep and vast; and in the wood night overtook them. “Ah, maiden,” said he, “it is vain to attempt

proceeding forward!” “Well, Lord,” said she, “whatsoever thou wishest, we will do.” “It will be best for us,” he answered, “to turn out of the wood, and to rest, and wait for the day, in order to pursue our journey.” “That will we, gladly,” said she. And they did so. Having dismounted himself, he took her down from her horse. “I cannot, by any means, refrain from sleep, through weariness,” said he. “Do thou, therefore, watch the horses, and sleep not.” “I will, Lord,” said she. Then he went to sleep in his armour, and thus passed the night, which was not long at that season. And when she saw the dawn of day appear, she looked around her, to see if he were waking, and thereupon he woke. “My Lord,” she said, “I have desired to awake thee for some time.” But he spake nothing to her about fatigue, as he had desired her to be silent. Then he arose, and said unto her, “Take the horses, and ride on; and keep straight on before thee as thou didst yesterday.” And early in the day they left the wood, and they came to an open country, with meadows on one hand, and mowers mowing the meadows. And there was a river before them, and the horses bent down, and drank the water. And they went up out of the river by a lofty steep; and there they met a slender stripling, with a satchel about his neck, and they saw that there was something in the satchel, but they knew not what it was. And he had a small blue pitcher in his hand, and a bowl on the mouth of the pitcher. And the youth saluted Geraint. “Heaven prosper thee,” said Geraint, “and whence dost thou come?” “I come,” said he, “from the city that lies before thee. My Lord,” he added, “will it be displeasing to thee if I ask whence thou comest also?” “By no means—through yonder wood did I come.” “Thou camest not through the wood to-day.” “No,” he replied, “we were in the wood last night.” “I warrant,” said the youth, “that thy condition there last night was not the most pleasant, and that thou hadst neither meat nor drink.” “No, by my faith,” said he. “Wilt thou follow my counsel,” said the youth, “and take thy meal from me?” “What sort of meal?” he inquired. “The breakfast which is sent for yonder mowers, nothing less than bread and meat and wine; and if thou wilt, Sir, they shall have none of it.” “I will,” said he, “and Heaven reward thee for it.”

So Geraint alighted, and the youth took the maiden from off her horse. Then they washed, and took their repast. And the youth cut the bread in slices, and gave them drink, and served them withal. And when they had finished, the youth arose, and said to Geraint, "My Lord, with thy permission, I will now go and fetch some food for the mowers." "Go, first, to the town," said Geraint, "and take a lodging for me in the best place that thou knowest, and the most commodious one for the horses, and take thou whichever horse and arms thou choosest in payment for thy service and thy gift." "Heaven reward thee, Lord," said the youth, "and this would be ample to repay services much greater than those I have rendered unto thee." And to the town went the youth, and he took the best and the most pleasant lodgings that he knew; and after that he went to the palace, having the horse and armour with him, and proceeded to the place where the Earl was, and told him all his adventure. "I go now, Lord," said he, "to meet the young man, and to conduct him to his lodging." "Go, gladly," said the Earl, "and right joyfully shall he be received here, if he so come." And the youth went to meet Geraint, and told him that he would be received gladly by the Earl in his own palace; but he would go only to his lodgings. And he had a goodly chamber, in which was plenty of straw, and drapery, and a spacious and commodious place he had for the horses; and the youth prepared for them plenty of provender. And after they had disarrayed themselves, Geraint spoke thus to Enid: "Go," said he, "to the other side of the chamber, and come not to this side of the house; and thou mayest call to thee the woman of the house, if thou wilt." "I will do, Lord," said she, "as thou sayest." And thereupon the man of the house came to Geraint, and welcomed him. "Oh, chieftain," he said, "hast thou taken thy meal?" "I have," said he. Then the youth spoke to him, and inquired if he would not drink something before he met the Earl. "Truly I will," said he. So the youth went into the town, and brought them drink. And they drank. "I must needs sleep," said Geraint. "Well," said the youth; "and whilst thou sleepest, I will go to see the Earl." "Go, gladly," he said, "and come here again when I require thee." And Geraint went to sleep; and so did Enid also.

And the youth came to the place where the Earl was, and the Earl asked him where the lodgings of the knight were, and he told him. "I must go," said the youth, "to wait on him in the evening." "Go," answered the Earl, "and greet him well from me, and tell him that in the evening I will go to see him." "This will I do," said the youth. So he came when it was time for them to awake. And they arose, and went forth. And when it was time for them to take their food, they took it. And the youth served them. And Geraint inquired of the man of the house, whether there were any of his companions that he wished to invite to him, and he said that there were. "Bring them hither, and entertain them at my cost with the best thou canst buy in the town."

And the man of the house brought there those whom he chose, and feasted them at Geraint's expense. Thereupon, behold, the Earl came to visit Geraint, and his twelve honourable knights with him. And Geraint rose up, and welcomed him. "Heaven preserve thee," said the Earl. Then they all sat down according to their precedence in honour. And the Earl conversed with Geraint, and inquired of him the object of his journey. "I have none," he replied, "but to seek adventures, and to follow my own inclination." Then the Earl cast his eye upon Enid, and he looked at her steadfastly. And he thought he had never seen a maiden fairer or more comely than she. And he set all his thoughts and his affections upon her. Then he asked of Geraint, "Have I thy permission to go and converse with yonder maiden, for I see that she is apart from thee?" "Thou hast it gladly," said he. So the Earl went to the place where the maiden was, and spake with her. "Ah, maiden," said he, "it cannot be pleasant to thee to journey thus with yonder man!" "It is not unpleasant to me," said she, "to journey the same road that he journeys." "Thou hast neither youths nor maidens to serve thee," said he. "Truly," she replied, "it is more pleasant for me to follow yonder man, than to be served by youths and maidens." "I will give thee good counsel," said he. "All my Earldom will I place in thy possession, if thou wilt dwell with me." "That will I not, by Heaven," she said; "yonder man was the first to whom my faith was ever pledged; and shall I prove inconstant to him!" "Thou art in the wrong," said the Earl; "if I slay the man yonder, I can keep

thee with me as long as I choose; and when thou no longer pleasest me I can turn thee away. But if thou goest with me by thine own good will, I protest that our union shall continue eternal and undivided as long as I remain alive." Then she pondered these words of his, and she considered that it was advisable to encourage him in his request. "Behold, then, chieftain, this is most expedient for thee to do to save me any needless imputation; come here to-morrow, and take me away as though I knew nothing thereof." "I will do so," said he. So he arose, and took his leave, and went forth with his attendants. And she told not then to Geraint any of the conversation which she had had with the Earl, lest it should rouse his anger, and cause him uneasiness and care.

And at the usual hour they went to sleep. And at the beginning of the night Enid slept a little; and at midnight she arose, and placed all Geraint's armour together, so that it might be ready to put on. And although fearful of her errand, she came to the side of Geraint's bed; and she spoke to him softly and gently, saying, "My Lord, arise, and clothe thyself, for these were the words of the Earl to me, and his intention concerning me." So she told Geraint all that had passed. And although he was wroth with her, he took warning, and clothed himself. And she lighted a candle, that he might have light to do so. "Leave there the candle," said he, "and desire the man of the house to come here." Then she went, and the man of the house came to him. "Dost thou know how much I owe thee?" asked Geraint. "I think thou owest but little." "Take the eleven horses and the eleven suits of armour." "Heaven reward thee, lord," said he, "but I spent not the value of one suit of armour upon thee." "For that reason," said he, "thou wilt be the richer. And now, wilt thou come to guide me out of the town?" "I will, gladly," said he, "and in which direction dost thou intend to go?" "I wish to leave the town by a different way from that by which I entered it." So the man of the lodgings accompanied him as far as he desired. Then he bade the maiden to go on before him; and she did so, and went straight forward, and his host returned home. And he had only just reached his house, when, behold, the greatest tumult approached that was ever heard. And when he looked out, he saw fourscore knights in complete armour around the house, with the

Earl Dwinn at their head. "Where is the knight that was here?" said the Earl. "By thy hand," said he, "he went hence some time ago." "Wherefore, villain," said he, "didst thou let him go without informing me?" "My Lord, thou didst not command me to do so, else would I not have allowed him to depart." "What way dost thou think that he took?" "I know not, except that he went along the high road." And they turned their horses' heads that way, and seeing the tracks of the horses upon the high road, they followed. And when the maiden beheld the dawning of the day, she looked behind her, and saw vast clouds of dust coming nearer and nearer to her. And thereupon she became uneasy, and she thought that it was the Earl and his host coming after them. And thereupon she beheld a knight appearing through the mist. "By my faith," said she, "though he should slay me, it were better for me to receive my death at his hands, than to see him killed without warning him. My Lord," she said to him, "seest thou yonder man hastening after thee, and many others with him?" "I do see him," said he; "and in despite of all my orders, I see that thou wilt never keep silence." Then he turned upon the knight, and with the first thrust he threw him down under his horse's feet. And as long as there remained one of the fourscore knights, he overthrew every one of them at the first onset. And from the weakest to the strongest, they all attacked him one after the other, except the Earl: and last of all the Earl came against him also. And he broke his lance, and then he broke a second. But Geraint turned upon him, and struck him with his lance upon the centre of his shield, so that by that single thrust the shield was split, and all his armour broken, and he himself was brought over his horse's crupper to the ground, and was in peril of his life. And Geraint drew near to him; and at the noise of the trampling of his horse the Earl revived. "Mercy, Lord," said he to Geraint. And Geraint granted him mercy. But through the hardness of the ground where they had fallen, and the violence of the stroke which they had received, there was not a single knight amongst them that escaped without receiving a fall, mortally severe, and grievously painful, and desperately wounding, from the hand of Geraint.

And Geraint journeyed along the high road that was before him, and the maiden went on first; and near them they beheld a valley which was the

fairest ever seen, and which had a large river running through it; and there was a bridge over the river, and the high road led to the bridge. And above the bridge upon the opposite side of the river, they beheld a fortified town, the fairest ever seen. And as they approached the bridge, Geraint saw coming towards him from a thick copse a man mounted upon a large and lofty steed, even of pace and spirited though tractable. "Ah, knight," said Geraint, "whence comest thou?" "I come," said he, "from the valley below us." "Canst thou tell me," said Geraint, "who is the owner of this fair valley and yonder walled town?" "I will tell thee, willingly," said he. "Gwiffert Petit he is called by the Franks, but the Cymry call him the Little King." "Can I go by yonder bridge," said Geraint, "and by the lower highway that is beneath the town?" Said the knight, "Thou canst not go by his tower on the other side of the bridge, unless thou dost intend to combat him; because it is his custom to encounter every knight that comes upon his lands." "I declare to Heaven," said Geraint, "that I will, nevertheless, pursue my journey that way." "If thou dost so," said the knight, "thou wilt probably meet with shame and disgrace in reward for thy daring." Then Geraint proceeded along the road that led to the town, and the road brought him to a ground that was hard, and rugged, and high, and ridgy. And as he journeyed thus, he beheld a knight following him upon a warhorse, strong, and large, and proudly-stepping, and wide-hoofed, and broad-chested. And he never saw a man of smaller stature than he who was upon the horse. And both he and his horse were completely armed. When he had overtaken Geraint, he said to him, "Tell me, chieftain, whether it is through ignorance or through presumption that thou seekest to insult my dignity, and to infringe my rules." "Nay," answered Geraint, "I knew not this road was forbid to any." "Thou didst know it," said the other; "come with me to my Court, to give me satisfaction." "That will I not, by my faith," said Geraint; "I would not go even to thy Lord's Court, excepting Arthur were thy Lord." "By the hand of Arthur himself," said the knight, "I will have satisfaction of thee, or receive my overthrow at thy hands." And immediately they charged one another. And a squire of his came to serve him with lances as he broke them. And they gave each other such hard and severe strokes that their

shields lost all their colour. But it was very difficult for Geraint to fight with him on account of his small size, for he was hardly able to get a full aim at him with all the efforts he could make. And they fought thus until their horses were brought down upon their knees; and at length Geraint threw the knight headlong to the ground; and then they fought on foot, and they gave one another blows so boldly fierce, so frequent, and so severely powerful, that their helmets were pierced, and their skullcaps were broken, and their arms were shattered, and the light of their eyes was darkened by sweat and blood. At the last Geraint became enraged, and he called to him all his strength; and boldly angry, and swiftly resolute, and furiously determined, he lifted up his sword, and struck him on the crown of his head a blow so mortally painful, so violent, so fierce, and so penetrating, that it cut through all his head armour, and his skin, and his flesh, until it wounded the very bone, and the sword flew out of the hand of the Little King to the furthest end of the plain, and he besought Geraint that he would have mercy and compassion upon him. "Though thou hast been neither courteous nor just," said Geraint, "thou shalt have mercy, upon condition that thou wilt become my ally, and engage never to fight against me again, but to come to my assistance whenever thou hearest of my being in trouble." "This will I do, gladly, Lord," said he. So he pledged him his faith thereof. "And now, Lord, come with me," said he, "to my Court yonder, to recover from thy weariness and fatigue." "That will I not, by Heaven," said he.

Then Gwiffert Petit beheld Enid where she stood, and it grieved him to see one of her noble mien appear so deeply afflicted. And he said to Geraint, "My Lord, thou doest wrong not to take repose, and refresh thyself awhile; for, if thou meetest with any difficulty in thy present condition, it will not be easy for thee to surmount it." But Geraint would do no other than proceed on his journey, and he mounted his horse in pain, and all covered with blood. And the maiden went on first, and they proceeded towards the wood which they saw before them.

And the heat of the sun was very great, and through the blood and sweat, Geraint's armour cleaved to his flesh; and when they came into the wood, he stood under a tree, to avoid the sun's heat; and his wounds pained



him more than they had done at the time when he received them. And the maiden stood under another tree. And lo! they heard the sound of horns, and a tumultuous noise; and the occasion of it was, that Arthur and his company had come down to the wood. And while Geraint was considering which way he should go to avoid them, behold, he was espied by a foot-page, who was an attendant on the Steward of the Household; and he went to the Steward, and told him what kind of man he had seen in the wood. Then the Steward caused his horse to be saddled, and he took his lance and his shield, and went to the place where Geraint was. "Ah, knight!" said he, "what dost thou here?" "I am standing under a shady tree, to avoid the heat and the rays of the sun." "Wherefore is thy journey, and who art thou?" "I seek adventures, and go where I list." "Indeed," said Kai; "then come with me to see Arthur, who is here hard by." "That will I not, by Heaven," said Geraint. "Thou must needs come," said Kai. Then Geraint knew who he was, but Kai did not know Geraint. And Kai attacked Geraint as best he could. And Geraint became wroth, and he struck him with the shaft of his lance, so that he rolled headlong to the ground. But chastisement worse than this would he not inflict on him.

Scared and wildly Kai arose, and he mounted his horse, and went back to his lodging. And thence he proceeded to Gwalchmai's tent. "Oh, Sir," said he to Gwalchmai, "I was told by one of the attendants, that he saw in the wood above a wounded knight, having on battered armour; and if thou dost right, thou wilt go and see if this be true." "I care not if I do so," said Gwalchmai. "Take, then, thy horse, and some of thy armour," said Kai; "for I hear that he is not over courteous to those who approach him." So Gwalchmai took his spear and his shield, and mounted his horse, and came to the spot where Geraint was. "Sir Knight," said he, "wherefore is thy journey?" "I journey for my own pleasure, and to seek the adventures of the world." "Wilt thou tell me who thou art; or wilt thou come and visit Arthur, who is near at hand?" "I will make no alliance with thee, nor will I go and visit Arthur," said he. And he knew that it was Gwalchmai, but Gwalchmai knew him not. "I purpose not to leave thee," said Gwalchmai, "till I know who thou art." And he charged him with his lance, and struck him on his

shield, so that the shaft was shivered into splinters, and their horses were front to front. Then Gwalchmai gazed fixedly upon him, and he knew him. "Ah, Geraint," said he, "is it thou that art here?" "I am not Geraint," said he. "Geraint thou art, by Heaven," he replied, "and a wretched and insane expedition is this." Then he looked around, and beheld Enid, and he welcomed her gladly. "Geraint," said Gwalchmai, "come thou and see Arthur; he is thy lord and thy cousin." "I will not," said he, "for I am not in a fit state to go and see any one." Thereupon, behold, one of the pages came after Gwalchmai to speak to him. So he sent him to apprise Arthur that Geraint was there wounded, and that he would not go to visit him, and that it was pitiable to see the plight that he was in. And this he did without Geraint's knowledge, inasmuch as he spoke in a whisper to the page. "Entreat Arthur," said he, "to have his tent brought near to the road, for he will not meet him willingly, and it is not easy to compel him in the mood he is in." So the page came to Arthur, and told him this. And he caused his tent to be removed unto the side of the road. And the maiden rejoiced in her heart. And Gwalchmai led Geraint onwards along the road, till they came to the place where Arthur was encamped, and the pages were pitching his tent by the roadside. "Lord," said Geraint, "all hail unto thee." "Heaven prosper thee; and who art thou?" said Arthur. "It is Geraint," said Gwalchmai, "and of his own free will would he not come to meet thee." "Verily," said Arthur, "he is bereft of his reason." Then came Enid, and saluted Arthur. "Heaven protect thee," said he. And thereupon he caused one of the pages to take her from her horse. "Alas! Enid," said Arthur, "what expedition is this?" "I know not, Lord," said she, "save that it behoves me to journey by the same road that he journeys." "My Lord," said Geraint, "with thy permission we will depart." "Whither wilt thou go?" said Arthur. "Thou canst not proceed now, unless it be unto thy death." "He will not suffer himself to be invited by me," said Gwalchmai. "But by me he will," said Arthur; "and, moreover, he does not go from here until he is healed." "I had rather, Lord," said Geraint, "that thou wouldest let me go forth." "That will I not, I declare to Heaven," said he. Then he caused a maiden to be sent for to conduct Enid to the tent where Gwenhwyvar's chamber was. And Gwenhwyvar and all her

women were joyful at her coming; and they took off her riding-dress, and placed other garments upon her. Arthur also called Kadyrieith, and ordered him to pitch a tent for Geraint and the physicians; and he enjoined him to provide him with abundance of all that might be requisite for him. And Kadyrieith did as he had commanded him. And Morgan Tud and his disciples were brought to Geraint.

And Arthur and his hosts remained there nearly a month, whilst Geraint was being healed. And when he was fully recovered, Geraint came to Arthur, and asked his permission to depart. "I know not if thou art quite well." "In truth I am, Lord," said Geraint. "I shall not believe thee concerning that, but the physicians that were with thee." So Arthur caused the physicians to be summoned to him, and asked them if it were true. "It is true, Lord," said Morgan Tud. So the next day Arthur permitted him to go forth, and he pursued his journey. And on the same day Arthur removed thence. And Geraint desired Enid to go on, and to keep before him, as she had formerly done. And she went forward along the high road. And as they journeyed thus, they heard an exceeding loud wailing near to them. "Stay thou here," said he, "and I will go and see what is the cause of this wailing." "I will," said she. Then he went forward unto an open glade that was near the road. And in the glade he saw two horses, one having a man's saddle, and the other a woman's saddle upon it. And, behold, there was a knight lying dead in his armour, and a young damsel in a riding-dress standing over him, lamenting. "Ah! Lady," said Geraint, "what hath befallen thee?" "Behold," she answered, "I journeyed here with my beloved husband, when, lo! three giants came upon us, and without any cause in the world, they slew him." "Which way went they hence?" said Geraint. "Yonder by the high road," she replied. So he returned to Enid. "Go," said he, "to the lady that is below yonder, and await me there till I come." She was sad when he ordered her to do thus, but nevertheless she went to the damsel, whom it was ruth to hear, and she felt certain that Geraint would never return. Meanwhile Geraint followed the giants, and overtook them. And each of them was greater of stature than three other men, and a huge club was on the shoulder of each. Then he rushed upon one of them, and thrust

his lance through his body. And having drawn it forth again, he pierced another of them through likewise. But the third turned upon him, and struck him with his club, so that he split his shield, and crushed his shoulder, and opened his wounds anew, and all his blood began to flow from him. But Geraint drew his sword, and attacked the giant, and gave him a blow on the crown of his head so severe, and fierce, and violent, that his head and his neck were split down to his shoulders, and he fell dead. So Geraint left him thus, and returned to Enid. And when he saw her, he fell down lifeless from his horse. Piercing, and loud, and thrilling was the cry that Enid uttered. And she came and stood over him where he had fallen. And at the sound of her cries came the Earl of Limours, and the host that journeyed with him, whom her lamentations brought out of their road. And the Earl said to Enid, "Alas, Lady, what hath befallen thee?" "Ah! good Sir," said she, "the only man I have loved, or ever shall love, is slain." Then he said to the other, "And what is the cause of thy grief?" "They have slain my beloved husband also," said she. "And who was it that slew them?" "Some giants," she answered, "slew my best-beloved, and the other knight went in pursuit of them, and came back in the state thou seest, his blood flowing excessively; but it appears to me that he did not leave the giants without killing some of them, if not all." The Earl caused the knight that was dead to be buried, but he thought that there still remained some life in Geraint; and to see if he yet would live, he had him carried with him in the hollow of his shield, and upon a bier. And the two damsels went to the Court; and when they arrived there, Geraint was placed upon a litter-couch in front of the table that was in the hall. Then they all took off their travelling gear, and the Earl besought Enid to do the same, and to clothe herself in other garments. "I will not, by Heaven," said she. "Ah! Lady," said he, "be not so sorrowful for this matter." "It were hard to persuade me to be otherwise," said she. "I will act towards thee in such wise, that thou needest not be sorrowful, whether yonder knight live or die. Behold, a good Earldom, together with myself, will I bestow on thee; be, therefore, happy and joyful." "I declare to Heaven," said she, "that henceforth I shall never be joyful while I live." "Come, then," said he, "and eat." "No, by Heaven, I will not," she

answered. "But, by Heaven, thou shalt," said he. So he took her with him to the table against her will, and many times desired her to eat. "I call Heaven to witness," said she, "that I will not eat until the man that is upon yonder bier shall eat likewise." "Thou canst not fulfil that," said the Earl, "yonder man is dead already." "I will prove that I can," said she. Then he offered her a goblet of liquor. "Drink this goblet," he said, "and it will cause thee to change thy mind." "Evil betide me," she answered, "if I drink aught until he drink also." "Truly," said the Earl, "it is of no more avail for me to be gentle with thee than ungentle." And he gave her a box on the ear. Thereupon she raised a loud and piercing shriek, and her lamentations were much greater than they had been before, for she considered in her mind that had Geraint been alive, he durst not have struck her thus. But, behold, at the sound of her cry, Geraint revived from his swoon, and he sat up on the bier, and finding his sword in the hollow of his shield, he rushed to the place where the Earl was, and struck him a fiercely-wounding, severely-venomous, and sternly-smiting blow upon the crown of his head, so that he clove him in twain, until his sword was stayed by the table. Then all left the board, and fled away. And this was not so much through fear of the living as through the dread they felt at seeing the dead man rise up to slay them. And Geraint looked upon Enid, and he was grieved for two causes; one was, to see that Enid had lost her colour and her wonted aspect, and the other, to know that she was in the right. "Lady," said he, "knowest thou where our horses are?" "I know, Lord, where thy horse is," she replied, "but I know not where is the other. Thy horse is in the house yonder." So he went to the house, and brought forth his horse, and mounted him, and took up Enid from the ground, and placed her upon the horse with him. And he rode forward. And their road lay between two hedges. And the night was gaining on the day. And lo! they saw behind them the shafts of spears betwixt them and the sky, and they heard the trampling of horses, and the noise of a host approaching. "I hear something following us," said he, "and I will put thee on the other side of the hedge." And thus he did. And thereupon, behold, a knight pricked towards him, and couched his lance. When Enid saw this, she cried out, saying, "Oh! chieftain, whoever thou art, what renown wilt thou gain

by slaying a dead man?" "Oh! Heaven," said he, "is it Geraint?" "Yes, in truth," said she. "And who art thou?" "I am the Little King," he answered, "coming to thy assistance, for I heard that thou wast in trouble. And if thou hadst followed my advice, none of these hardships would have befallen thee." "Nothing can happen," said Geraint, "without the will of Heaven, though much good results from counsel." "Yes," said the Little King, "and I know good counsel for thee now. Come with me to the court of a son-in-law of my sister, which is near here, and thou shalt have the best medical assistance in the kingdom." "I will do so gladly," said Geraint. And Enid was placed upon the horse of one of the Little King's squires, and they went forward to the Baron's palace. And they were received there with gladness, and they met with hospitality and attention. And the next morning they went to seek physicians; and it was not long before they came, and they attended Geraint until he was perfectly well. And while Geraint was under medical care, the Little King caused his armour to be repaired, until it was as good as it had ever been. And they remained there a fortnight and a month.

Then the Little King said to Geraint, "Now will we go towards my own Court, to take rest, and amuse ourselves." "Not so," said Geraint, "we will first journey for one day more, and return again." "With all my heart," said the Little King, "do thou go then." And early in the day they set forth. And more gladly and more joyfully did Enid journey with them that day than she had ever done. And they came to the main road. And when they reached a place where the road divided in two, they beheld a man on foot coming towards them along one of these roads, and Gwiffert asked the man whence he came. "I come," said he, "from an errand in the country." "Tell me," said Geraint, "which is the best for me to follow of these two roads?" "That is the best for thee to follow," answered he, "for if thou goest by this one, thou wilt never return. Below us," said he, "there is a hedge of mist, and within it are enchanted games, and no one who has gone there has ever returned. And the Court of the Earl Owain is there, and he permits no one to go to lodge in the town, except he will go to his Court." "I declare to Heaven," said Geraint, "that we will take the lower road." And they went along it

until they came to the town. And they took the fairest and pleasantest place in the town for their lodging. And while they were thus, behold, a young man came to them, and greeted them. "Heaven be propitious to thee," said they. "Good Sirs," said he, "what preparations are you making here?" "We are taking up our lodging," said they, "to pass the night." "It is not the custom with him who owns the town," he answered, "to permit any of gentle birth, unless they come to stay in his Court, to abide here; therefore, come ye to the Court." "We will come, gladly," said Geraint. And they went with the page, and they were joyfully received. And the Earl came to the hall to meet them, and he commanded the tables to be laid. And they washed, and sat down. And this is the order in which they sat: Geraint on one side of the Earl, and Enid on the other side, and next to Enid the Little King, and then the Countess next to Geraint; and all after that as became their rank. Then Geraint recollected the games, and thought that he should not go to them; and on that account he did not eat. Then the Earl looked upon Geraint, and considered, and he bethought him that his not eating was because of the games, and it grieved him that he had ever established those games, were it only on account of losing such a youth as Geraint. And if Geraint had asked him to abolish the games, he would gladly have done so. Then the Earl said to Geraint, "What thought occupies thy mind, that thou dost not eat? If thou hesitatest about going to the games, thou shalt not go, and no other of thy rank shall ever go either." "Heaven reward thee," said Geraint, "but I wish nothing better than to go to the games, and to be shown the way thither." "If that is what thou dost prefer, thou shalt obtain it willingly." "I do prefer it, indeed," said he. Then they ate, and they were amply served, and they had a variety of gifts, and abundance of liquor. And when they had finished eating they arose. And Geraint called for his horse and his armour, and he accoutred both himself and his horse. And all the hosts went forth until they came to the side of the hedge, and the hedge was so lofty, that it reached as high as they could see in the air, and upon every stake in the hedge, except two, there was the head of a man, and the number of stakes throughout the hedge was very great. Then said the Little King, "May no one go in with the chieftain?" "No one may," said Earl Owain.

“Which way can I enter?” inquired Geraint. “I know not,” said Owain, “but enter by the way that thou wilt, and that seemeth easiest to thee.”

Then fearlessly and unhesitatingly Geraint dashed forward into the mist. And on leaving the mist, he came to a large orchard; and in the orchard he saw an open space, wherein was a tent of red satin; and the door of the tent was open, and an apple-tree stood in front of the door of the tent; and on a branch of the apple-tree hung a huge hunting-horn. Then he dismounted, and went into the tent; and there was no one in the tent save one maiden sitting in a golden chair, and another chair was opposite to her, empty. And Geraint went to the empty chair, and sat down therein. “Ah! chieftain,” said the maiden, “I would not counsel thee to sit in that chair.” “Wherefore?” said Geraint. “The man to whom that chair belongs has never suffered another to sit in it.” “I care not,” said Geraint, “though it displease him that I sit in the chair.” And thereupon they heard a mighty tumult around the tent. And Geraint looked to see what was the cause of the tumult. And he beheld without a knight mounted upon a warhorse, proudly snorting, high-mettled, and large of bone; and a robe of honour in two parts was upon him and upon his horse, and beneath it was plenty of armour. “Tell me, chieftain,” said he to Geraint, “who it was that bade thee sit there?” “Myself,” answered he. “It was wrong of thee to do me this shame and disgrace. Arise, and do me satisfaction for thine insolence.” Then Geraint arose; and they encountered immediately; and they broke a set of lances, and a second set, and a third; and they gave each other fierce and frequent strokes; and at last Geraint became enraged, and he urged on his horse, and rushed upon him, and gave him a thrust on the centre of his shield, so that it was split, and so that the head of his lance went through his armour, and his girths were broken, and he himself was borne headlong to the ground the length of Geraint’s lance and arm, over his horse’s crupper. “Oh, my Lord!” said he, “thy mercy, and thou shalt have what thou wilt.” “I only desire,” said Geraint, “that this game shall no longer exist here, nor the hedge of mist, nor magic, nor enchantment.” “Thou shalt have this gladly, Lord,” he replied. “Cause, then, the mist to disappear from this place,” said Geraint. “Sound yonder horn,” said he, “and when thou soundest it, the mist will



vanish; but it will not go hence unless the horn be blown by the knight by whom I am vanquished.” And sad and sorrowful was Enid where she remained, through anxiety concerning Geraint. Then Geraint went and sounded the horn. And at the first blast he gave, the mist vanished. And all the hosts came together, and they all became reconciled to each other. And the Earl invited Geraint and the Little King to stay with him that night. And the next morning they separated. And Geraint went towards his own dominions; and thenceforth he reigned prosperously, and his warlike fame and splendour lasted with renown and honour both to him and to Enid from that time forth.

## **Kilhwch and Olwen or the Twrch Trwyth**

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Kilydd the son of Prince Kelyddon desired a wife as a helpmate, and the wife that he chose was Goleuddydd, the daughter of Prince Anlawdd. And after their union, the people put up prayers that they might have an heir. And they had a son through the prayers of the people. From the time of her pregnancy Goleuddydd became wild, and wandered about, without habitation; but when her delivery was at hand, her reason came back to her. Then she went to a mountain where there was a swineherd, keeping a herd of swine. And through fear of the swine the queen was delivered. And the swineherd took the boy, and brought him to the palace; and he was christened, and they called him Kilhwch, because he had been found in a swine’s burrow. Nevertheless the boy was of gentle lineage, and cousin unto Arthur; and they put him out to nurse.

After this the boy’s mother, Goleuddydd, the daughter of Prince Anlawdd, fell sick. Then she called her husband unto her, and said to him, “Of this sickness I shall die, and thou wilt take another wife. Now wives are the gift of the Lord, but it would be wrong for thee to harm thy son. Therefore I charge thee that thou take not a wife until thou see a briar with two blossoms upon my grave.” And this he promised her. Then she besought him to dress her grave every year, that nothing might grow

thereon. So the queen died. Now the king sent an attendant every morning to see if anything were growing upon the grave. And at the end of the seventh year the master neglected that which he had promised to the queen.

One day the king went to hunt, and he rode to the place of burial to see the grave, and to know if it were time that he should take a wife; and the king saw the briar. And when he saw it, the king took counsel where he should find a wife. Said one of his counsellors, "I know a wife that will suit thee well, and she is the wife of King Doged." And they resolved to go to seek her; and they slew the king, and brought away his wife and one daughter that she had along with her. And they conquered the king's lands.

On a certain day, as the lady walked abroad, she came to the house of an old crone that dwelt in the town, and that had no tooth in her head. And the queen said to her, "Old woman, tell me that which I shall ask thee, for the love of Heaven. Where are the children of the man who has carried me away by violence?" Said the crone, "He has not children." Said the queen, "Woe is me, that I should have come to one who is childless!" Then said the hag, "Thou needest not lament on account of that, for there is a prediction he shall have an heir by thee, and by none other. Moreover, be not sorrowful, for he has one son."

The lady returned home with joy; and she asked her consort, "Wherefore hast thou concealed thy children from me?" The king said, "I will do so no longer." And he sent messengers for his son, and he was brought to the Court. His stepmother said unto him, "It were well for thee to have a wife, and I have a daughter who is sought of every man of renown in the world." "I am not yet of an age to wed," answered the youth. Then said she unto him, "I declare to thee, that it is thy destiny not to be suited with a wife until thou obtain Olwen, the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr." And the youth blushed, and the love of the maiden diffused itself through all his frame, although he had never seen her. And his father inquired of him, "What has come over thee, my son, and what aileth thee?" "My stepmother has declared to me that I shall never have a wife until I obtain Olwen, the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr." "That will be easy for thee," answered

his father. "Arthur is thy cousin. Go, therefore, unto Arthur, to cut thy hair, and ask this of him as a boon."

And the youth pricked forth upon a steed with head dappled grey, of four winters old, firm of limb, with shell-formed hoofs, having a bridle of linked gold on his head, and upon him a saddle of costly gold. And in the youth's hand were two spears of silver, sharp, well-tempered, headed with steel, three ells in length, of an edge to wound the wind, and cause blood to flow, and swifter than the fall of the dewdrop from the blade of reed-grass upon the earth when the dew of June is at the heaviest. A gold-hilted sword was upon his thigh, the blade of which was of gold, bearing a cross of inlaid gold of the hue of the lightning of heaven: his war-horn was of ivory. Before him were two brindled white-breasted greyhounds, having strong collars of rubies about their necks, reaching from the shoulder to the ear. And the one that was on the left side bounded across to the right side, and the one on the right to the left, and like two sea-swallows sported around him. And his courser cast up four sods with his four hoofs, like four swallows in the air, about his head, now above, now below. About him was a four-cornered cloth of purple, and an apple of gold was at each corner, and every one of the apples was of the value of an hundred kine. And there was precious gold of the value of three hundred kine upon his shoes, and upon his stirrups, from his knee to the tip of his toe. And the blade of grass bent not beneath him, so light was his courser's tread as he journeyed towards the gate of Arthur's Palace.

Spoke the youth, "Is there a porter?" "There is; and if thou holdest not thy peace, small will be thy welcome. I am Arthur's porter every first day of January. And during every other part of the year but this, the office is filled by Huandaw, and Gogigwc, and Llaeskenym, and Pennpingyon, who goes upon his head to save his feet, neither towards the sky nor towards the earth, but like a rolling stone upon the floor of the court." "Open the portal." "I will not open it." "Wherefore not?" "The knife is in the meat, and the drink is in the horn, and there is revelry in Arthur's Hall, and none may enter therein but the son of a king of a privileged country, or a craftsman bringing his craft. But there will be refreshment for thy dogs, and

for thy horses; and for thee there will be collops cooked and peppered, and luscious wine and mirthful songs, and food for fifty men shall be brought unto thee in the guest chamber, where the stranger and the sons of other countries eat, who come not unto the precincts of the Palace of Arthur. Thou wilt fare no worse there than thou wouldest with Arthur in the Court. A lady shall smooth thy couch, and shall lull thee with songs; and early to-morrow morning, when the gate is open for the multitude that come hither to-day, for thee shall it be opened first, and thou mayest sit in the place that thou shalt choose in Arthur's Hall, from the upper end to the lower." Said the youth, "That will I not do. If thou openest the gate, it is well. If thou dost not open it, I will bring disgrace upon thy Lord, and evil report upon thee. And I will set up three shouts at this very gate, than which none were ever more deadly, from the top of Pengwaed in Cornwall to the bottom of Dinsol, in the North, and to Esgair Oervel, in Ireland. And all the women in this Palace that are pregnant shall lose their offspring; and such as are not pregnant, their hearts shall be turned by illness, so that they shall never bear children from this day forward." "What clamour soever thou mayest make," said Glewlwyd Gavaelvawr, "against the laws of Arthur's Palace shalt thou not enter therein, until I first go and speak with Arthur."

Then Glewlwyd went into the Hall. And Arthur said to him, "Hast thou news from the gate?"—"Half of my life is past, and half of thine. I was heretofore in Kaer Se and Asse, in Sach and Salach, in Lotor and Fotor; and I have been heretofore in India the Great and India the Lesser; and I was in the battle of Dau Ynyr, when the twelve hostages were brought from Llychlyn. And I have also been in Europe, and in Africa, and in the islands of Corsica, and in Caer Brythwch, and Brythach, and Verthach; and I was present when formerly thou didst slay the family of Clis the son of Merin, and when thou didst slay Mil Du the son of Ducum, and when thou didst conquer Greece in the East. And I have been in Caer Oeth and Annoeth, and in Caer Nevenhyr; nine supreme sovereigns, handsome men, saw we there, but never did I behold a man of equal dignity with him who is now at the door of the portal." Then said Arthur, "If walking thou didst enter in here, return thou running. And every one that beholds the light, and every

one that opens and shuts the eye, let them shew him respect, and serve him, some with gold-mounted drinking-horns, others with collops cooked and peppered, until food and drink can be prepared for him. It is unbecoming to keep such a man as thou sayest he is, in the wind and the rain.” Said Kai, “By the hand of my friend, if thou wouldest follow my counsel, thou wouldest not break through the laws of the Court because of him.” “Not so, blessed Kai. It is an honour to us to be resorted to, and the greater our courtesy the greater will be our renown, and our fame, and our glory.”

And Glewlwyd came to the gate, and opened the gate before him; and although all dismounted upon the horseblock at the gate, yet did he not dismount, but rode in upon his charger. Then said Kilhwch, “Greeting be unto thee, Sovereign Ruler of this Island; and be this greeting no less unto the lowest than unto the highest, and be it equally unto thy guests, and thy warriors, and thy chieftains—let all partake of it as completely as thyself. And complete be thy favour, and thy fame, and thy glory, throughout all this Island.” “Greeting unto thee also,” said Arthur; “sit thou between two of my warriors, and thou shalt have minstrels before thee, and thou shalt enjoy the privileges of a king born to a throne, as long as thou remainest here. And when I dispense my presents to the visitors and strangers in this Court, they shall be in thy hand at my commencing.” Said the youth, “I came not here to consume meat and drink; but if I obtain the boon that I seek, I will requite it thee, and extol thee; and if I have it not, I will bear forth thy dispraise to the four quarters of the world, as far as thy renown has extended.” Then said Arthur, “Since thou wilt not remain here, chieftain, thou shalt receive the boon whatsoever thy tongue may name, as far as the wind dries, and the rain moistens, and the sun revolves, and the sea encircles, and the earth extends; save only my ship; and my mantle; and Caledvwlch, my sword; and Rhongomyant, my lance; and Wynebgwrthucher, my shield; and Carnwenhau, my dagger; and Gwenhwyvar, my wife. By the truth of Heaven, thou shalt have it cheerfully, name what thou wilt.” “I would that thou bless my hair.” “That shall be granted thee.”

And Arthur took a golden comb, and scissors, whereof the loops were of silver, and he combed his hair. And Arthur inquired of him who he was. "For my heart warms unto thee, and I know that thou art come of my blood. Tell me, therefore, who thou art." "I will tell thee," said the youth. "I am Kilhwch, the son of Kilydd, the son of Prince Kelyddon, by Goleuddydd, my mother, the daughter of Prince Anlawdd." "That is true," said Arthur; "thou art my cousin. Whatsoever boon thou mayest ask, thou shalt receive, be it what it may that thy tongue shall name." "Pledge the truth of Heaven and the faith of thy kingdom thereof." "I pledge it thee, gladly." "I crave of thee then, that thou obtain for me Olwen, the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr; and this boon I likewise seek at the hands of thy warriors. I seek it from Kai, and Bedwyr, and Greidawl Galldonyd, and Gwythyr the son of Greidawl, and Greid the son of Eri, and Kynddelig Kyvarwydd, and Tathal Twyll Goleu, and Maelwys the son of Baeddan, and Crychwr the son of Nes, and Cubert the son of Daere, and Percos the son of Poch, and Lluber Beuthach, and Corvil Bervach, and Gwynn the son of Nudd, and Edeyrn the son of Nudd, and Gadwy the son of Geraint, and Prince Fflewddur Fflam, and Ruawn Pebyr the son of Dorath, and Bradwen the son of Moren Mynawc, and Moren Mynawc himself, and Dalldav the son of Kimin Côt, and the son of Alun Dyved, and the son of Saidi, and the son of Gwryon, and Uchtryd Ardywad Kad, and Kynwas Curvagyl, and Gwrhwr Gwarthegvras, and Isperyr Ewingath, and Gallcoyt Govynynat, and Duach, and Grathach, and Nerthach, the sons of Gwawrddur Kyrvach (these men came forth from the confines of hell), and Kilydd Canhastyr, and Canastyr Kanllaw, and Cors Cant-Ewin, and Esgeir Gulhwch Govynkawn, and Drustwrn Hayarn, and Glewlwyd Gavaelvawr, and Lloch Llawwynnyawc, and Aunwas Adeiniawc, and Sinnoch the son of Seithved, and Gwennwynwyn the son of Naw, and Bedyw the son of Seithved, and Gobrwyr the son of Echel Vorddwyttwll, and Echel Vorddwyttwll himself, and Mael the son of Roycol, and Dadweir Dallpenn, and Garwyli the son of Gwythawc Gwyr, and Gwythawc Gwyr himself, and Gormant the son of Ricca, and Menw the son of Teirgwaedd, and Digon the son of Alar, and Selyf the son of Smoit, and Gusg the son of Atheu, and Nerth the son of

Kedarn, and Drudwas the son of Tryffin, and Twrch the son of Perif, and Twrch the son of Annwas, and Iona king of France, and Sel the son of Selgi, and Teregud the son of Iaen, and Sulyen the son of Iaen, and Bradwen the son of Iaen, and Moren the son of Iaen, and Siawn the son of Iaen, and Cradawc the son of Iaen. (They were men of Caerdathal, of Arthur's kindred on his father's side.) Dirmyg the son of Kaw, and Justic the son of Kaw, and Etmic the son of Kaw, and Anghawd the son of Kaw, and Ovan the son of Kaw, and Kelin the son of Kaw, and Connyn the son of Kaw, and Mabsant the son of Kaw, and Gwyngad the son of Kaw, and Llwybyr the son of Kaw, and Coth the son of Kaw, and Meilic the son of Kaw, and Kynwas the son of Kaw, and Ardwyad the son of Kaw, and Ergyryad the son of Kaw, and Neb the son of Kaw, and Gilda the son of Kaw, and Calcas the son of Kaw, and Hueil the son of Kaw (he never yet made a request at the hand of any Lord). And Samson Vinsych, and Taliesin the chief of the bards, and Manawyddan the son of Llyr, and Llary the son of Prince Kasnar, and Ysperni the son of Fflergant king of Armorica, and Saranhon the son of Glythwyr, and Llawr Eilerw, and Annyanniawc the son of Menw the son of Teirgwaedd, and Gwynn the son of Nwyvre, and Fflam the son of Nwyvre, and Geraint the son of Erbin, and Ermid the son of Erbin, and Dyvel the son of Erbin, and Gwynn the son of Ermid, and Kyndrwyn the son of Ermid, and Hyveidd Unllenn, and Eiddon Vawr Vrydic, and Reidwn Arwy, and Gormant the son of Ricca (Arthur's brother by his mother's side; the Penhynev of Cornwall was his father), and Llawnrodded Varvawc, and Nodawl Varyf Twrch, and Berth the son of Kado, and Rheidwn the son of Beli, and Iscovan Hael, and Iscawin the son of Panon, and Morvran the son of Tegid (no one struck him in the battle of Camlan by reason of his ugliness; all thought he was an auxiliary devil. Hair had he upon him like the hair of a stag). And Sandde Bryd Angel (no one touched him with a spear in the battle of Camlan because of his beauty; all thought he was a ministering angel). And Kynwyl Sant (the third man that escaped from the battle of Camlan, and he was the last who parted from Arthur on Hengroen his horse). And Uchtryd the son of Erim, and Eus the son of Erim, and Henwas Adeinawg the son of Erim, and Henbedestyr the son of Erim, and

Sgilti Yscawndroed the son of Erim. (Unto these three men belonged these three qualities,—With Henbedestyr there was not any one who could keep pace, either on horseback or on foot; with Henwas Adeinawg, no four-footed beast could run the distance of an acre, much less could it go beyond it; and as to Sgilti Yscawndroed, when he intended to go upon a message for his Lord, he never sought to find a path, but knowing whither he was to go, if his way lay through a wood he went along the tops of the trees. During his whole life, a blade of reed grass bent not beneath his feet, much less did one ever break, so lightly did he tread.) Teithi Hên the son of Gwynhan (his dominions were swallowed up by the sea, and he himself hardly escaped, and he came to Arthur; and his knife had this peculiarity, that from the time that he came there no haft would ever remain upon it, and owing to this a sickness came over him, and he pined away during the remainder of his life, and of this he died). And Carneddyr the son of Govynyon Hên, and Gwenwynwyn the son of Nav Gyssevin, Arthur's champion, and Llysgadrudd Emys, and Gwrbothu Hên (uncles unto Arthur were they, his mother's brothers). Kulvanawyd the son of Goryon, and Llenlleawg Wyddel from the headland of Ganion, and Dyvynwal Moel, and Dunard king of the North, Teirnon Twryf Bliant, and Tegvan Gloff, and Tegyr Talgellawg, Gwrdinal the son of Ebrei, and Morgant Hael, Gwystyl the son of Rhun the son of Nwython, and Llwyddeu the son of Nwython, and Gwydre the son of Llwyddeu (Gwenabwy the daughter of (Kaw) was his mother, Hueil his uncle stabbed him, and hatred was between Hueil and Arthur because of the wound). Drem the son of Dremidydd (when the gnat arose in the morning with the sun, he could see it from Gelli Wic in Cornwall, as far off as Pen Blathaon in North Britain). And Eidyol the son of Ner, and Glwyddyn Saer (who constructed Ehangwen, Arthur's Hall). Kynyr Keinvarvawc (when he was told he had a son born he said to his wife, 'Damsel, if thy son be mine, his heart will be always cold, and there will be no warmth in his hands; and he will have another peculiarity, if he is my son he will always be stubborn; and he will have another peculiarity, when he carries a burden, whether it be large or small, no one will be able to see it, either before him or at his back; and he will have another



peculiarity, no one will be able to resist fire and water so well as he will; and he will have another peculiarity, there will never be a servant or an officer equal to him'). Henwas, and Henwyneb (an old companion to Arthur). Gwallgoyc (another; when he came to a town, though there were three hundred houses in it, if he wanted anything, he would not let sleep come to the eyes of any one whilst he remained there). Berwyn the son of Gerenhir, and Paris king of France, and Osla Gyllellvawr (who bore a short broad dagger. When Arthur and his hosts came before a torrent, they would seek for a narrow place where they might pass the water, and would lay the sheathed dagger across the torrent, and it would form a bridge sufficient for the armies of the three Islands of Britain, and of the three islands adjacent, with their spoil). Gwyddawg the son of Menestyr (who slew Kai, and whom Arthur slew, together with his brothers, to revenge Kai). Garanwyn the son of Kai, and Amren the son of Bedwyr, and Ely Amyr, and Rheu Rhwyd Dyrys, and Rhun Rhudwern, and Eli, and Trachmyr (Arthur's chief huntsmen). And Llwyddeu the son of Kelcoed, and Hunabwy the son of Gwryon, and Gwynn Godyvron, and Gweir Datharwenniddawg, and Gweir the son of Cadell the son of Talaryant, and Gweir Gwrhyd Ennwir, and Gweir Paladyr Hir (the uncles of Arthur, the brothers of his mother). The sons of Llwhch Llawwynnyawg (from beyond the raging sea). Llenlleawg Wyddel, and Ardderchawg Prydain. Cas the son of Saidi, Gwrvan Gwallt Awryn, and Gwyllennhin the king of France, and Gwittart the son of Oedd king of Ireland. Garselit Wyddel, Panawr Pen Bagad, and Ffleudor the son of Nav, Gwynnhyvar mayor of Cornwall and Devon (the ninth man that rallied the battle of Camlan). Keli and Kueli, and Gilla Coes Hydd (he would clear three hundred acres at one bound: the chief leaper of Ireland was he). Sol, and Gwadyrn Ossol, and Gwadyrn Odyeth. (Sol could stand all day upon one foot. Gwadyrn Ossol, if he stood upon the top of the highest mountain in the world, it would become a level plain under his feet. Gwadyrn Odyeth, the soles of his feet emitted sparks of fire when they struck upon things hard, like the heated mass when drawn out of the forge. He cleared the way for Arthur when he came to any stoppage.) Hirerwm and Hiratrwm. (The day they went on a visit three Cantreys provided for

their entertainment, and they feasted until noon and drank until night, when they went to sleep. And then they devoured the heads of the vermin through hunger, as if they had never eaten anything. When they made a visit they left neither the fat nor the lean, neither the hot nor the cold, the sour nor the sweet, the fresh nor the salt, the boiled nor the raw.) Huarwar the son of Aflawn (who asked Arthur such a boon as would satisfy him. It was the third great plague of Cornwall when he received it. None could get a smile from him but when he was satisfied). Gware Gwallt Euryn. The two cubs of Gast Rhymi, Gwyddrud and Gwyddneu Astrus. Sugyn the son of Sugnedydd (who would suck up the sea on which were three hundred ships so as to leave nothing but a dry strand. He was broad-chested). Rhacymwri, the attendant of Arthur (whatever barn he was shown, were there the produce of thirty ploughs within it, he would strike it with an iron flail until the rafters, the beams, and the boards were no better than the small oats in the mow upon the floor of the barn). Dygyflwng and Anoeth Veidawg. And Hir Eiddyl, and Hir Amreu (they were two attendants of Arthur). And Gwevyl the son of Gwestad (on the day that he was sad, he would let one of his lips drop below his waist, while he turned up the other like a cap upon his head). Uchtryd Varyf Draws (who spread his red untrimmed beard over the eight-and-forty rafters which were in Arthur's Hall). Elidyr Gyvarwydd. Yskyrdav and Yscudydd (two attendants of Gwenhwyvar were they. Their feet were swift as their thoughts when bearing a message). Brys the son of Bryssethach (from the Hill of the Black Fernbrake in North Britain). And Grudlwyn Gorr. Bwlch, and Kyfwlch, and Sefwlch, the sons of Cleddyf Kyfwlch, the grandsons of Cleddyf Difwlch. (Their three shields were three gleaming glitterers; their three spears were three pointed piercers; their three swords were three grinding gashers; Glas, Glessic, and Gleisad. Their three dogs, Call, Cuall, and Cavall. Their three horses, Hwyrddyddw, and Drwgdyddw, and Llwyrdyddwg. Their three wives, Och, and Garym, and Diaspad. Their three grandchildren, Lluched, and Neved, and Eissiwed. Their three daughters, Drwg, and Gwaeth, and Gwaethav Oll. Their three hand-maids, Eheubryd the daughter of Kyfwlch, Gorascwrn the daughter of Nerth, Ewaedan the daughter of Kynvelyn Keudawd Pwyll the half-man.)

Dwnn Diessic Unbenn, Eiladyr the son of Pen Llarcau, Kynedyr Wyllt the son of Hettwn Talaryant, Sawyl Ben Uchel, Gwalchmai the son of Gwyar, Gwalhaved the son of Gwyar, Gwrhyr Gwastawd Ieithoedd (to whom all tongues were known), and Kethcrwm the Priest. Clust the son of Clustveinad (though he were buried seven cubits beneath the earth, he would hear the ant fifty miles off rise from her nest in the morning). Medyr the son of Methredydd (from Gelli Wic he could, in a twinkling, shoot the wren through the two legs upon Esgeir Oervel in Ireland). Gwiawn Llygad Cath (who could cut a haw from the eye of the gnat without hurting him). Ol the son of Olwydd (seven years before he was born his father's swine were carried off, and when he grew up a man he tracked the swine, and brought them back in seven herds). Bedwini the Bishop (who blessed Arthur's meat and drink). For the sake of the golden-chained daughters of this island. For the sake of Gwenhwyvar its chief lady, and Gwennhwyach her sister, and Rathtyeu the only daughter of Clemenhill, and Rhelemon the daughter of Kai, and Tannwen the daughter of Gweir Datharwenîddawg. Gwenn Alarch the daughter of Kynwyl Canbwch. Eurneid the daughter of Clydno Eiddin. Eneuawc the daughter of Bedwyr. Enrydreg the daughter of Tudvathar. Gwennwledyr the daughter of Gwaledyr Kyrvach. Erddudnid the daughter of Tryffin. Eurolwen the daughter of Gwdolwyn Gorr. Teleri the daughter of Peul. Indeg the daughter of Garwy Hir. Morvudd the daughter of Urien Rheged. Gwenllian Deg the majestic maiden. Creiddylad the daughter of Lludd Llaw Ereint. (She was the most splendid maiden in the three Islands of the mighty, and in the three Islands adjacent, and for her Gwythyr the son of Greidawl and Gwynn the son of Nudd fight every first of May until the day of doom.) Ellylw the daughter of Neol Kynn-Crog (she lived three ages). Essyllt Vinwen and Essyllt Vingul." And all these did Kilhwch the son of Kilydd adjure to obtain his boon.

Then said Arthur, "Oh! chieftain, I have never heard of the maiden of whom thou speakest, nor of her kindred, but I will gladly send messengers in search of her. Give me time to seek her." And the youth said, "I will willingly grant from this night to that at the end of the year to do so." Then Arthur sent messengers to every land within his dominions to seek for the

maiden; and at the end of the year Arthur's messengers returned without having gained any knowledge or intelligence concerning Olwen more than on the first day. Then said Kilhwch, "Every one has received his boon, and I yet lack mine. I will depart and bear away thy honour with me." Then said Kai, "Rash chieftain! dost thou reproach Arthur? Go with us, and we will not part until thou dost either confess that the maiden exists not in the world, or until we obtain her." Thereupon Kai rose up. Kai had this peculiarity, that his breath lasted nine nights and nine days under water, and he could exist nine nights and nine days without sleep. A wound from Kai's sword no physician could heal. Very subtle was Kai. When it pleased him he could render himself as tall as the highest tree in the forest. And he had another peculiarity,—so great was the heat of his nature, that, when it rained hardest, whatever he carried remained dry for a handbreadth above and a handbreadth below his hand; and when his companions were coldest, it was to them as fuel with which to light their fire.

And Arthur called Bedwyr, who never shrank from any enterprise upon which Kai was bound. None was equal to him in swiftness throughout this island except Arthur and Drych Ail Kibddar. And although he was one-handed, three warriors could not shed blood faster than he on the field of battle. Another property he had; his lance would produce a wound equal to those of nine opposing lances.

And Arthur called to Kynddelig the Guide, "Go thou upon this expedition with the chieftain." For as good a guide was he in a land which he had never seen as he was in his own.

He called Gwrhyr Gwalstawt Ieithoedd, because he knew all tongues.

He called Gwalchmai the son of Gwyar, because he never returned home without achieving the adventure of which he went in quest. He was the best of footmen and the best of knights. He was nephew to Arthur, the son of his sister, and his cousin.

And Arthur called Menw the son of Teirgwaedd, in order that if they went into a savage country, he might cast a charm and an illusion over them, so that none might see them whilst they could see every one.

They journeyed until they came to a vast open plain, wherein they saw a great castle, which was the fairest of the castles of the world. And they journeyed that day until the evening, and when they thought they were nigh to the castle, they were no nearer to it than they had been in the morning. And the second and the third day they journeyed, and even then scarcely could they reach so far. And when they came before the castle, they beheld a vast flock of sheep, which was boundless and without an end. And upon the top of a mound there was a herdsman, keeping the sheep. And a rug made of skins was upon him; and by his side was a shaggy mastiff, larger than a steed nine winters old. Never had he lost even a lamb from his flock, much less a large sheep. He let no occasion ever pass without doing some hurt and harm. All the dead trees and bushes in the plain he burnt with his breath down to the very ground.

Then said Kai, “Gwrhyr Gwalstawt Ieithoedd, go thou and salute yonder man.” “Kai,” said he, “I engaged not to go further than thou thyself.” “Let us go then together,” answered Kai. Said Menw the son of Teirgwaedd, “Fear not to go thither, for I will cast a spell upon the dog, so that he shall injure no one.” And they went up to the mound whereon the herdsman was, and they said to him, “How dost thou fare, O herdsman?” “No less fair be it to you than to me.” “Truly, art thou the chief?” “There is no hurt to injure me but my own.”<sup>2</sup> “Whose are the sheep that thou dost keep, and to whom does yonder castle belong?” “Stupid are ye, truly! Through the whole world is it known that this is the castle of Yspaddaden Penkawr.” “And who art thou?” “I am called Custennin the son of Dyfnedig, and my brother Yspaddaden Penkawr oppressed me because of my possessions. And ye also, who are ye?” “We are an embassy from Arthur, come to seek Olwen the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr.” “Oh men! the mercy of Heaven be upon you, do not that for all the world. None who ever came hither on this quest has returned alive.” And the herdsman rose up. And as he arose, Kilhwch gave unto him a ring of gold. And he sought to put on the ring, but it was too small for him, so he placed it in the finger of his glove. And he went home, and gave the glove to his spouse to keep. And she took the ring from the glove when it was given her, and she

said, "Whence came this ring, for thou art not wont to have good fortune?" "I went," said he, "to the sea to seek for fish, and lo, I saw a corpse borne by the waves. And a fairer corpse than it did I never behold. And from its finger did I take this ring." "O man! does the sea permit its dead to wear jewels? Show me then this body." "Oh wife, him to whom this ring belonged thou shalt see here in the evening." "And who is he?" asked the woman, "Kilhwch the son of Kilydd, the son of Prince Kelyddon, by Goleuddydd the daughter of Prince Anlawdd, his mother, who is come to seek Olwen as his wife." And when she heard that, her feelings were divided between the joy that she had that her nephew, the son of her sister, was coming to her, and sorrow because she had never known any one depart alive who had come on that quest.

And they went forward to the gate of Custennin the herdsman's dwelling. And when she heard their footsteps approaching, she ran out with joy to meet them. And Kai snatched a billet out of the pile. And when she met them she sought to throw her arms about their necks. And Kai placed the log between her two hands, and she squeezed it so that it became a twisted coil. "Oh woman," said Kai, "if thou hadst squeezed me thus, none could ever again have set their affections on me. Evil love were this." They entered into the house, and were served; and soon after they all went forth to amuse themselves. Then the woman opened a stone chest that was before the chimney-corner, and out of it arose a youth with yellow curling hair. Said Gwrhyr, "It is a pity to hide this youth. I know that it is not his own crime that is thus visited upon him." "This is but a remnant," said the woman. "Three-and-twenty of my sons has Yspaddaden Penkawr slain, and I have no more hope of this one than of the others." Then said Kai, "Let him come and be a companion with me, and he shall not be slain unless I also am slain with him." And they ate. And the woman asked them, "Upon what errand come you here?" "We come to seek Olwen for this youth." Then said the woman, "In the name of Heaven, since no one from the castle hath yet seen you, return again whence you came." "Heaven is our witness, that we will not return until we have seen the maiden." Said Kai, "Does she ever come hither, so that she may be seen?" "She comes here every

Saturday to wash her head, and in the vessel where she washes, she leaves all her rings, and she never either comes herself or sends any messengers to fetch them.”

“Will she come here if she is sent to?” “Heaven knows that I will not destroy my soul, nor will I betray those that trust me; unless you will pledge me your faith that you will not harm her, I will not send to her.” “We pledge it,” said they. So a message was sent, and she came.

The maiden was clothed in a robe of flame-coloured silk, and about her neck was a collar of ruddy gold, on which were precious emeralds and rubies. More yellow was her head than the flower of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands and her fingers than the blossoms of the wood anemone amidst the spray of the meadow fountain. The eye of the trained hawk, the glance of the three-mewed falcon was not brighter than hers. Her bosom was more snowy than the breast of the white swan, her cheek was redder than the reddest roses. Whoso beheld her was filled with her love. Four white trefoils sprung up wherever she trod. And therefore was she called Olwen.

She entered the house, and sat beside Kilhwch upon the foremost bench; and as soon as he saw her he knew her. And Kilhwch said unto her, “Ah! maiden, thou art she whom I have loved; come away with me, lest they speak evil of thee and of me. Many a day have I loved thee.” “I cannot do this, for I have pledged my faith to my father not to go without his counsel, for his life will last only until the time of my espousals. Whatever is, must be. But I will give thee advice if thou wilt take it. Go, ask me of my father, and that which he shall require of thee, grant it, and thou wilt obtain me; but if thou deny him anything, thou wilt not obtain me, and it will be well for thee if thou escape with thy life.” “I promise all this, if occasion offer,” said he.

She returned to her chamber, and they all rose up and followed her to the castle. And they slew the nine porters that were at the nine gates in silence. And they slew the nine watch-dogs without one of them barking. And they went forward to the hall.

“The greeting of Heaven and of man be unto thee, Yspaddaden Penkawr,” said they. “And you, wherefore come you?” “We come to ask thy daughter Olwen, for Kilhwch the son of Kilydd, the son of Prince Kelyddon.” “Where are my pages and my servants? Raise up the forks beneath my two eyebrows which have fallen over my eyes, that I may see the fashion of my son-in-law.” And they did so. “Come hither to-morrow, and you shall have an answer.”

They rose to go forth, and Yspaddaden Penkawr seized one of the three poisoned darts that lay beside him, and threw it after them. And Bedwyr caught it, and flung it, and pierced Yspaddaden Penkawr grievously with it through the knee. Then he said, “A cursed ungentle son-in-law, truly. I shall ever walk the worse for his rudeness, and shall ever be without a cure. This poisoned iron pains me like the bite of a gadfly. Cursed be the smith who forged it, and the anvil whereon it was wrought! So sharp is it!”

That night also they took up their abode in the house of Custennin the herdsman. The next day with the dawn they arrayed themselves in haste and proceeded to the castle, and entered the hall, and they said, “Yspaddaden Penkawr, give us thy daughter in consideration of her dower and her maiden fee, which we will pay to thee and to her two kinswomen likewise. And unless thou wilt do so, thou shalt meet with thy death on her account.” Then he said, “Her four great-grandmothers, and her four great-grandsires are yet alive, it is needful that I take counsel of them.” “Be it so,” answered they, “we will go to meat.” As they rose up, he took the second dart that was beside him, and cast it after them. And Menw the son of Gwaedd caught it, and flung it back at him, and wounded him in the centre of the breast, so that it came out at the small of his back. “A cursed ungentle son-in-law, truly,” said he, “the hard iron pains me like the bite of a horse-leech. Cursed be the hearth whereon it was heated, and the smith who formed it! So sharp is it! Henceforth, whenever I go up a hill, I shall have a scant in my breath, and a pain in my chest, and I shall often loathe my food.” And they went to meat.

And the third day they returned to the palace. And Yspaddaden Penkawr said to them, “Shoot not at me again unless you desire death.



Where are my attendants? Lift up the forks of my eyebrows which have fallen over my eyeballs, that I may see the fashion of my son-in-law.” Then they arose, and, as they did so, Yspaddaden Penkawr took the third poisoned dart and cast it at them. And Kilhwch caught it and threw it vigorously, and wounded him through the eyeball, so that the dart came out at the back of his head. “A cursed ungentle son-in-law, truly! As long as I remain alive, my eyesight will be the worse. Whenever I go against the wind, my eyes will water; and peradventure my head will burn, and I shall have a giddiness every new moon. Cursed be the fire in which it was forged. Like the bite of a mad dog is the stroke of this poisoned iron.” And they went to meat.

And the next day they came again to the palace, and they said, “Shoot not at us any more, unless thou desirest such hurt, and harm, and torture as thou now hast, and even more.” “Give me thy daughter, and if thou wilt not give her, thou shalt receive thy death because of her.” “Where is he that seeks my daughter? Come hither where I may see thee.” And they placed him a chair face to face with him.

Said Yspaddaden Penkawr, “Is it thou that seekest my daughter?” “It is I,” answered Kilhwch. “I must have thy pledge that thou wilt not do towards me otherwise than is just, and when I have gotten that which I shall name, my daughter thou shalt have.” “I promise thee that willingly,” said Kilhwch, “name what thou wilt.” “I will do so,” said he.

“Seest thou yonder vast hill?” “I see it.” “I require that it be rooted up, and that the grubbings be burned for manure on the face of the land, and that it be ploughed and sown in one day, and in one day that the grain ripen. And of that wheat I intend to make food and liquor fit for the wedding of thee and my daughter. And all this I require done in one day.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though this be easy for thee, there is yet that which will not be so. No husbandman can till or prepare this land, so wild is it, except Amaethon the son of Don, and he will not come with thee by his own free will, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Govannon the son of Don to come to the headland to rid the iron, he will do no work of his own good will except for a lawful king, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get; the two dun oxen of Gwlwlyd, both yoked together, to plough the wild land yonder stoutly. He will not give them of his own free will, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get; the yellow and the brindled bull yoked together do I require.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get; the two horned oxen, one of which is beyond, and the other this side of the peaked mountain, yoked together in the same plough. And these are Nynniaw and Peibaw whom God turned into oxen on account of their sins.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Seest thou yonder red tilled ground?”

“I see it.”

“When first I met the mother of this maiden, nine bushels of flax were sown therein, and none has yet sprung up, neither white nor black; and I have the measure by me still. I require to have the flax to sow in the new land yonder, that when it grows up it may make a white wimple for my daughter’s head, on the day of thy wedding.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Honey that is nine times sweeter than the honey of the virgin swarm, without scum and bees, do I require to make bragget for the feast.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“The vessel of Llwyrr the son of Llwyryon, which is of the utmost value. There is no other vessel in the world that can hold this drink. Of his free will thou wilt not get it, and thou canst not compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The basket of Gwyddneu Garanhir, if the whole world should come together, thrice nine men at a time, the meat that each of them desired would be found within it. I require to eat therefrom on the night that my daughter becomes thy bride. He will give it to no one of his own free will, and thou canst not compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The horn of Gwlgawd Gododin to serve us with liquor that night. He will not give it of his own free will, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The harp of Teirtu to play to us that night. When a man desires that it should play, it does so of itself, and when he desires that it should cease, it ceases. And this he will not give of his own free will, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The cauldron of Diwrnach Wyddel, the steward of Odgar the son of Aedd, king of Ireland, to boil the meat for thy marriage feast.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. It is needful for me to wash my head, and shave my beard, and I require the tusk of Yskithyrwyn Penbaedd to shave myself withal, neither shall I profit by its use if it be not plucked alive out of his head.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. There is no one in the world that can pluck it out of his head except Odgar the son of Aedd, king of Ireland.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. I will not trust any one to keep the tusk except Gado of North Britain. Now the threescore Cantrevs of North Britain are under his sway, and of his own free will he will not come out of his kingdom, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. I must spread out my hair in order to shave it, and it will never be spread out unless I have the blood of the jet-black sorceress, the daughter of the pure white sorceress, from Pen Nant Govid, on the confines of Hell.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. I will not have the blood unless I have it warm, and no vessels will keep warm the liquid that is put therein except the bottles of Gwyddolwyd Gorr, which preserve the heat of the liquor that is put into them in the east, until they arrive at the west. And he will not give them of his own free will, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Some will desire fresh milk, and it will not be possible to have fresh milk for all,

unless we have the bottles of Rhinnon Rhin Barnawd, wherein no liquor ever turns sour. And he will not give them of his own free will, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Throughout the world there is not a comb or scissors with which I can arrange my hair, on account of its rankness, except the comb and scissors that are between the two ears of Twrch Trwyth, the son of Prince Tared. He will not give them of his own free will, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. It will not be possible to hunt Twrch Trwyth without Drudwyn the whelp of Greid, the son of Eri.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Throughout the world there is not a leash that can hold him, except the leash of Cwrs Cant Ewin.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Throughout the world there is no collar that will hold the leash except the collar of Canhastyr Canllaw.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The chain of Kilydd Canhastyr to fasten the collar to the leash.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Throughout the world there is not a huntsman who can hunt with this dog, except Mabon the son of Modron. He was taken from his mother when three nights old, and it is not known where he now is, nor whether he is living or dead.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Gwynn Mygdwn, the horse of Gweddwn, that is as swift as the wave, to carry Mabon the son of Modron to hunt the boar Trwyth. He will not give him of his own free will, and thou wilt not be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Thou wilt not get Mabon, for it is not known where he is, unless thou find Eidoel, his kinsman in blood, the son of Aer. For it would be useless to seek for him. He is his cousin.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Garselit the Gwyddelian is the chief huntsman of Ireland; the Twrch Trwyth can never be hunted without him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. A leash made from the beard of Dillus Varvawc, for that is the only one that can hold those two cubs. And the leash will be of no avail unless it be plucked from his beard while he is alive, and twitched out with wooden tweezers. While he lives he will not suffer this to be done to him, and the leash will be of no use should he be dead, because it will be brittle.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Throughout the world there is no huntsman that can hold those two whelps except Kynedyr Wyllt, the son of Hettwn Glafyrawc; he is nine times more wild than the wildest beast upon the mountains. Him wilt thou never get, neither wilt thou ever get my daughter.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. It is not possible to hunt the boar Trwyth without Gwynn the son of Nudd, whom God has placed over the brood of devils in Annwryn, lest they should destroy the present race. He will never be spared thence.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. There is not a horse in the world that can carry Gwynn to hunt the Twrch Trwyth, except Du, the horse of Mor of Oerveddawg.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Until Gilennhin the king of France shall come, the Twrch Trwyth cannot be hunted. It will be unseemly for him to leave his kingdom for thy sake, and he will never come hither.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The Twrch Trwyth can never be hunted without the son of Alun Dyved; he is well skilled in letting loose the dogs.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The Twrch Trwyth cannot be hunted unless thou get Aned and Aethlem. They are as swift as the gale of wind, and they were never let loose upon a beast that they did not kill him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get; Arthur and his companions to hunt the Twrch Trwyth. He is a mighty man, and he will not come for thee, neither wilt thou be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The Twrch Trwyth cannot be hunted unless thou get Bwlch, and Kyfwlch and Sefwlch, the grandsons of Cleddyf Difwlch. Their three shields are three gleaming glitterers. Their three spears are three pointed piercers. Their three swords are three griding gashers, Glas, Glessic, and Clersag. Their three dogs, Call, Cwall, and Cavall. Their three horses, Hwyrddwg, and Drwgdydwg, and Llwyrdydwg. Their three wives, Och, and Garam, and Diaspad. Their three grandchildren, Lluched, and Vyned, and Eissiwed. Their three daughters, Drwg, and Gwaeth, and Gwaethav Oll. Their three hand-maids (Eheubryd, the daughter of Kyfwlch; Gorasgwrn, the daughter of Nerth; and Gwaedan, the daughter of Kynvelyn). These three men shall sound the horn, and all the others shall shout, so that all will think that the sky is falling to the earth.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The sword of Gwrnach the Giant; he will never be slain except therewith. Of his own free will he will not give it, either for a price or as a gift, and thou wilt never be able to compel him.”

“It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy.”

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. Difficulties shalt thou meet with, and nights without sleep, in seeking this, and if thou obtain it not, neither shalt thou obtain my daughter.”

“Horses shall I have, and chivalry; and my lord and kinsman Arthur will obtain for me all these things. And I shall gain thy daughter, and thou shalt



lose thy life.”

“Go forward. And thou shalt not be chargeable for food or raiment for my daughter while thou art seeking these things; and when thou hast compassed all these marvels, thou shalt have my daughter for thy wife.”

All that day they journeyed until the evening, and then they beheld a vast castle, which was the largest in the world. And lo, a black man, huger than three of the men of this world, came out from the castle. And they spoke unto him, “Whence comest thou, O man?” “From the castle which you see yonder.” “Whose castle is that?” asked they. “Stupid are ye truly, O men. There is no one in the world that does not know to whom this castle belongs. It is the castle of Gwrnach the Giant.” “What treatment is there for guests and strangers that alight in that castle?” “Oh! Chieftain, Heaven protect thee. No guest ever returned thence alive, and no one may enter therein unless he brings with him his craft.”

Then they proceeded towards the gate. Said Gwrhryr Gwalstawt Ieithoedd, “Is there a porter?” “There is. And thou, if thy tongue be not mute in thy head, wherefore dost thou call?” “Open the gate.” “I will not open it.” “Wherefore wilt thou not?” “The knife is in the meat, and the drink is in the horn, and there is revelry in the hall of Gwrnach the Giant, and except for a craftsman who brings his craft, the gate will not be opened to-night.” “Verily, porter,” then said Kai, “my craft bring I with me.” “What is thy craft?” “The best burnisher of swords am I in the world.” “I will go and tell this unto Gwrnach the Giant, and I will bring thee an answer.”

So the porter went in, and Gwrnach said to him, “Hast thou any news from the gate?” “I have. There is a party at the door of the gate who desire to come in.” “Didst thou inquire of them if they possessed any art?” “I did inquire,” said he, “and one told me that he was well skilled in the burnishing of swords.” “We have need of him then. For some time have I sought for some one to polish my sword, and could find no one. Let this man enter, since he brings with him his craft.” The porter thereupon returned and opened the gate. And Kai went in by himself, and he saluted Gwrnach the Giant. And a chair was placed for him opposite to Gwrnach. And Gwrnach said to him, “Oh man! is it true that is reported of thee, that

thou knowest how to burnish swords?" "I know full well how to do so," answered Kai. Then was the sword of Gwrnach brought to him. And Kai took a blue whetstone from under his arm, and asked him whether he would have it burnished white or blue. "Do with it as it seems good to thee, and as thou wouldest if it were thine own." Then Kai polished one half of the blade and put it in his hand. "Will this please thee?" asked he. "I would rather than all that is in my dominions that the whole of it were like unto this. It is a marvel to me that such a man as thou should be without a companion." "Oh! noble sir, I have a companion, albeit he is not skilled in this art." "Who may he be?" "Let the porter go forth, and I will tell him whereby he may know him. The head of his lance will leave its shaft, and draw blood from the wind, and will descend upon its shaft again." Then the gate was opened, and Bedwyr entered. And Kai said, "Bedwyr is very skilful, although he knows not this art."

And there was much discourse among those who were without, because that Kai and Bedwyr had gone in. And a young man who was with them, the only son of Custennin the herdsman, got in also. And he caused all his companions to keep close to him as he passed the three wards, and until he came into the midst of the castle. And his companions said unto the son of Custennin, "Thou hast done this! Thou art the best of all men." And thenceforth he was called Goreu, the son of Custennin. Then they dispersed to their lodgings, that they might slay those who lodged therein, unknown to the Giant.

The sword was now polished, and Kai gave it unto the hand of Gwrnach the Giant, to see if he were pleased with his work. And the Giant said, "The work is good, I am content therewith." Said Kai, "It is thy scabbard that hath rusted thy sword, give it to me that I may take out the wooden sides of it and put in new ones." And he took the scabbard from him, and the sword in the other hand. And he came and stood over against the Giant, as if he would have put the sword into the scabbard; and with it he struck at the head of the Giant, and cut off his head at one blow. Then they despoiled the castle, and took from it what goods and jewels they would. And again on

the same day, at the beginning of the year, they came to Arthur's Court, bearing with them the sword of Gwrnach the Giant.

Now, when they told Arthur how they had sped, Arthur said, "Which of these marvels will it be best for us to seek first?" "It will be best," said they, "to seek Mabon the son of Modron; and he will not be found unless we first find Eidoel the son of Aer, his kinsman." Then Arthur rose up, and the warriors of the Islands of Britain with him, to seek for Eidoel; and they proceeded until they came before the Castle of Glivi, where Eidoel was imprisoned. Glivi stood on the summit of his castle, and he said, "Arthur, what requirest thou of me, since nothing remains to me in this fortress, and I have neither joy nor pleasure in it; neither wheat nor oats? Seek not therefore to do me harm." Said Arthur, "Not to injure thee came I hither, but to seek for the prisoner that is with thee." "I will give thee my prisoner, though I had not thought to give him up to any one; and therewith shalt thou have my support and my aid."

His followers said unto Arthur, "Lord, go thou home, thou canst not proceed with thy host in quest of such small adventures as these." Then said Arthur, "It were well for thee, Gwrhyr Gwalstawt Ieithoedd, to go upon this quest, for thou knowest all languages, and art familiar with those of the birds and the beasts. Thou, Eidoel, oughtest likewise to go with my men in search of thy cousin. And as for you, Kai and Bedwyr, I have hope of whatever adventure ye are in quest of, that ye will achieve it. Achieve ye this adventure for me."

They went forward until they came to the Ousel of Cilgwri. And Gwrhyr adjured her for the sake of Heaven, saying, "Tell me if thou knowest aught of Mabon the son of Modron, who was taken when three nights old from between his mother and the wall." And the Ousel answered, "When I first came here, there was a smith's anvil in this place, and I was then a young bird; and from that time no work has been done upon it, save the pecking of my beak every evening, and now there is not so much as the size of a nut remaining thereof; yet the vengeance of Heaven be upon me, if during all that time I have ever heard of the man for whom you inquire. Nevertheless I will do that which is right, and that which it is fitting that I

should do for an embassy from Arthur. There is a race of animals who were formed before me, and I will be your guide to them.”

So they proceeded to the place where was the Stag of Redynvre. “Stag of Redynvre, behold we are come to thee, an embassy from Arthur, for we have not heard of any animal older than thou. Say, knowest thou aught of Mabon the son of Modron, who was taken from his mother when three nights old?” The Stag said, “When first I came hither, there was a plain all around me, without any trees save one oak sapling, which grew up to be an oak with an hundred branches. And that oak has since perished, so that now nothing remains of it but the withered stump; and from that day to this I have been here, yet have I never heard of the man for whom you inquire. Nevertheless, being an embassy from Arthur, I will be your guide to the place where there is an animal which was formed before I was.”

So they proceeded to the place where was the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd. “Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd, here is an embassy from Arthur; knowest thou aught of Mabon the son of Modron, who was taken after three nights from his mother?” “If I knew I would tell you. When first I came hither, the wide valley you see was a wooded glen. And a race of men came and rooted it up. And there grew there a second wood; and this wood is the third. My wings, are they not withered stumps? Yet all this time, even until to-day, I have never heard of the man for whom you inquire. Nevertheless, I will be the guide of Arthur’s embassy until you come to the place where is the oldest animal in this world, and the one that has travelled most, the Eagle of Gwern Abwy.”

Gwrhŷr said, “Eagle of Gwern Abwy, we have come to thee an embassy from Arthur, to ask thee if thou knowest aught of Mabon the son of Modron, who was taken from his mother when he was three nights old.” The Eagle said, “I have been here for a great space of time, and when I first came hither there was a rock here, from the top of which I pecked at the stars every evening; and now it is not so much as a span high. From that day to this I have been here, and I have never heard of the man for whom you inquire, except once when I went in search of food as far as Llyn Llyw. And when I came there, I struck my talons into a salmon, thinking he would

serve me as food for a long time. But he drew me into the deep, and I was scarcely able to escape from him. After that I went with my whole kindred to attack him, and to try to destroy him, but he sent messengers, and made peace with me; and came and besought me to take fifty fish spears out of his back. Unless he know something of him whom you seek, I cannot tell who may. However, I will guide you to the place where he is.”

So they went thither; and the Eagle said, “Salmon of Llyn Llyw, I have come to thee with an embassy from Arthur, to ask thee if thou knowest aught concerning Mabon the son of Modron, who was taken away at three nights old from his mother.” “As much as I know I will tell thee. With every tide I go along the river upwards, until I come near to the walls of Gloucester, and there have I found such wrong as I never found elsewhere; and to the end that ye may give credence thereto, let one of you go thither upon each of my two shoulders.” So Kai and Gwrhyr Gwalstawt Ieithoedd went upon the two shoulders of the salmon, and they proceeded until they came unto the wall of the prison, and they heard a great wailing and lamenting from the dungeon. Said Gwrhyr, “Who is it that laments in this house of stone?” “Alas, there is reason enough for whoever is here to lament. It is Mabon the son of Modron who is here imprisoned; and no imprisonment was ever so grievous as mine, neither that of Llud Llaw Ereint, nor that of Greid the son of Eri.” “Hast thou hope of being released for gold or for silver, or for any gifts of wealth, or through battle and fighting?” “By fighting will whatever I may gain be obtained.”

Then they went thence, and returned to Arthur, and they told him where Mabon the son of Modron was imprisoned. And Arthur summoned the warriors of the Island, and they journeyed as far as Gloucester, to the place where Mabon was in prison. Kai and Bedwyr went upon the shoulders of the fish, whilst the warriors of Arthur attacked the castle. And Kai broke through the wall into the dungeon, and brought away the prisoner upon his back, whilst the fight was going on between the warriors. And Arthur returned home, and Mabon with him at liberty.

Said Arthur, “Which of the marvels will it be best for us now to seek first?” “It will be best to seek for the two cubs of Gast Rhymhi.” “Is it

known,” asked Arthur, “where she is?” “She is in Aber Deu Cleddyf,” said one. Then Arthur went to the house of Tringad, in Aber Cleddyf, and he inquired of him whether he had heard of her there. “In what form may she be?” “She is in the form of a she-wolf,” said he; “and with her there are two cubs.” “She has often slain my herds, and she is there below in a cave in Aber Cleddyf.”

So Arthur went in his ship Prydwen by sea, and the others went by land, to hunt her. And they surrounded her and her two cubs, and God did change them again for Arthur into their own form. And the host of Arthur dispersed themselves into parties of one and two.

On a certain day, as Gwythyr the son of Greidawl was walking over a mountain, he heard a wailing and a grievous cry. And when he heard it, he sprang forward, and went towards it. And when he came there, he drew his sword, and smote off an ant-hill close to the earth, whereby it escaped being burned in the fire. And the ants said to him, “Receive from us the blessing of Heaven, and that which no man can give we will give thee.” Then they fetched the nine bushels of flax-seed which Yspaddaden Penkawr had required of Kilhwch, and they brought the full measure without lacking any, except one flax-seed, and that the lame pismire brought in before night.

As Kai and Bedwyr sat on a beacon cairn on the summit of Plinlimmon, in the highest wind that ever was in the world, they looked around them, and saw a great smoke towards the south, afar off, which did not bend with the wind. Then said Kai, “By the hand of my friend, behold, yonder is the fire of a robber!” Then they hastened towards the smoke, and they came so near to it, that they could see Dillus Varvawc scorching a wild boar. “Behold, yonder is the greatest robber that ever fled from Arthur,” said Bedwyr unto Kai. “Dost thou know him?” “I do know him,” answered Kai, “he is Dillus Varvawc, and no leash in the world will be able to hold Drudwyn, the cub of Greid the son of Eri, save a leash made from the beard of him thou seest yonder. And even that will be useless, unless his beard be plucked alive with wooden tweezers; for if dead, it will be brittle.” “What thinkest thou that we should do concerning this?” said Bedwyr. “Let us suffer him,” said Kai, “to eat as much as he will of the meat, and after that

he will fall asleep.” And during that time they employed themselves in making the wooden tweezers. And when Kai knew certainly that he was asleep, he made a pit under his feet, the largest in the world, and he struck him a violent blow, and squeezed him into the pit. And there they twitched out his beard completely with the wooden tweezers; and after that they slew him altogether.

And from thence they both went to Gelli Wic, in Cornwall, and took the leash made of Dillus Varvawc’s beard with them, and they gave it into Arthur’s hand. Then Arthur composed this Englyn—

Kai made a leash  
Of Dillus son of Eurei’s beard.  
Were he alive, thy death he’d be.

And thereupon Kai was wroth, so that the warriors of the Island could scarcely make peace between Kai and Arthur. And thenceforth, neither in Arthur’s troubles, nor for the slaying of his men, would Kai come forward to his aid for ever after.

Said Arthur, “Which of the marvels is it best for us now to seek?” “It is best for us to seek Drudwyn, the cub of Greid the son of Eri.”

A little while before this, Creiddylad the daughter of Lludd Llaw Ereint, and Gwythyr the son of Greidawl, were betrothed. And before she had become his bride, Gwyn ap Nudd came and carried her away by force; and Gwythyr the son of Greidawl gathered his host together, and went to fight with Gwyn ap Nudd. But Gwyn overcame him, and captured Greid the son of Eri, and Glinneu the son of Taran, and Gwrgwst Ledlwm, and Dynvarth his son. And he captured Penn the son of Nethawg, and Nwython, and Kyledyr Wyllt his son. And they slew Nwython, and took out his heart, and constrained Kyledyr to eat the heart of his father. And therefrom Kyledyr became mad. When Arthur heard of this, he went to the North, and summoned Gwyn ap Nudd before him, and set free the nobles whom he had put in prison, and made peace between Gwyn ap Nudd and Gwythyr the son of Greidawl. And this was the peace that was made:—that the maiden

should remain in her father's house, without advantage to either of them, and that Gwyn ap Nudd and Gwythyr the son of Greidawl should fight for her every first of May, from thenceforth until the day of doom, and that whichever of them should then be conqueror should have the maiden.

And when Arthur had thus reconciled these chieftains, he obtained Mygdwn, Gweddw's horse, and the leash of Cwrs Cant Ewin.

And after that Arthur went into Armorica, and with him Mabon the son of Mellet, and Gware Gwallt Euryn, to seek the two dogs of Glythmyr Ledewic. And when he had got them, he went to the West of Ireland, in search of Gwrgi Seven; and Odgar the son of Aedd king of Ireland went with him. And thence went Arthur into the North, and captured Kyledyr Wyllt; and he went after Yskithyrwyn Penbaedd. And Mabon the son of Mellet came with the two dogs of Glythmyr Ledewic in his hand, and Drudwyn, the cub of Greid the son of Eri. And Arthur went himself to the chase, leading his own dog Cavall. And Kaw, of North Britain, mounted Arthur's mare Llamrei, and was first in the attack. Then Kaw, of North Britain, wielded a mighty axe, and absolutely daring he came valiantly up to the boar, and clave his head in twain. And Kaw took away the tusk. Now the boar was not slain by the dogs that Yspaddaden had mentioned, but by Cavall, Arthur's own dog.

And after Yskithyrwyn Penbaedd was killed, Arthur and his host departed to Gelli Wic in Cornwall. And thence he sent Menw the son of Teirgwaedd to see if the precious things were between the two ears of Twrch Trwyth, since it were useless to encounter him if they were not there. Albeit it was certain where he was, for he had laid waste the third part of Ireland. And Menw went to seek for him, and he met with him in Ireland, in Esgeir Oerfel. And Menw took the form of a bird; and he descended upon the top of his lair, and strove to snatch away one of the precious things from him, but he carried away nothing but one of his bristles. And the boar rose up angrily and shook himself so that some of his venom fell upon Menw, and he was never well from that day forward.

After this Arthur sent an embassy to Odgar, the son of Aedd king of Ireland, to ask for the cauldron of Diwrnach Wyddel, his purveyor. And



Odgar commanded him to give it. But Diwrnach said, "Heaven is my witness, if it would avail him anything even to look at it, he should not do so." And the embassy of Arthur returned from Ireland with this denial. And Arthur set forward with a small retinue, and entered into Prydwen, his ship, and went over to Ireland. And they proceeded into the house of Diwrnach Wyddel. And the hosts of Odgar saw their strength. When they had eaten and drunk as much as they desired, Arthur demanded to have the cauldron. And he answered, "If I would have given it to any one, I would have given it at the word of Odgar king of Ireland."

When he had given them this denial, Bedwyr arose and seized hold of the cauldron, and placed it upon the back of Hygwyd, Arthur's servant, who was brother, by the mother's side, to Arthur's servant, Cachamwri. His office was always to carry Arthur's cauldron, and to place fire under it. And Llenlleawg Wyddel seized Caledfwlch, and brandished it. And they slew Diwrnach Wyddel and his company. Then came the Irish and fought with them. And when he had put them to flight, Arthur with his men went forward to the ship, carrying away the cauldron full of Irish money. And he disembarked at the house of Llwydden the son of Kelcoed, at Porth Kerddin in Dyved. And there is the measure of the cauldron.

Then Arthur summoned unto him all the warriors that were in the three Islands of Britain, and in the three Islands adjacent, and all that were in France and in Armorica, in Normandy and in the Summer Country, and all that were chosen footmen and valiant horsemen. And with all these he went into Ireland. And in Ireland there was great fear and terror concerning him. And when Arthur had landed in the country, there came unto him the saints of Ireland and besought his protection. And he granted his protection unto them, and they gave him their blessing. Then the men of Ireland came unto Arthur, and brought him provisions. And Arthur went as far as Esgeir Oervel in Ireland, to the place where the Boar Trwyth was with his seven young pigs. And the dogs were let loose upon him from all sides. That day until evening the Irish fought with him, nevertheless he laid waste the fifth part of Ireland. And on the day following the household of Arthur fought with him, and they were worsted by him, and got no advantage. And the

third day Arthur himself encountered him, and he fought with him nine nights and nine days without so much as killing even one little pig. The warriors inquired of Arthur what was the origin of that swine; and he told them that he was once a king, and that God had transformed him into a swine for his sins.

Then Arthur sent Gwrhyr Gwalstawt Ieithoedd, to endeavour to speak with him. And Gwrhyr assumed the form of a bird, and alighted upon the top of the lair, where he was with the seven young pigs. And Gwrhyr Gwalstawt Ieithoedd asked him, "By him who turned you into this form, if you can speak, let some one of you, I beseech you, come and talk with Arthur." Grugyn Gwrych Ereint made answer to him. (Now his bristles were like silver wire, and whether he went through the wood or through the plain, he was to be traced by the glittering of his bristles.) And this was the answer that Grugyn made: "By him who turned us into this form, we will not do so, and we will not speak with Arthur. That we have been transformed thus is enough for us to suffer, without your coming here to fight with us." "I will tell you. Arthur comes but to fight for the comb, and the razor, and the scissors which are between the two ears of Twrch Trwyth." Said Grugyn, "Except he first take his life, he will never have those precious things. And to-morrow morning we will rise up hence, and we will go into Arthur's country, and there will we do all the mischief that we can."

So they set forth through the sea towards Wales. And Arthur and his hosts, and his horses and his dogs, entered Prydwen, that they might encounter them without delay. Twrch Trwyth landed in Porth Cleis in Dyved, and Arthur came to Mynyw. The next day it was told to Arthur that they had gone by, and he overtook them as they were killing the cattle of Kynnwas Kwrr y Vagyl, having slain all that were at Aber Gledwyf, of man and beast, before the coming of Arthur.

Now when Arthur approached, Twrch Trwyth went on as far as Preseleu, and Arthur and his hosts followed him thither, and Arthur sent men to hunt him; Eli and Trachmyr, leading Drudwyn the whelp of Greid the son of Eri, and Gwarthegydd the son of Kaw, in another quarter, with the

two dogs of Glythmyr Ledewic, and Bedwyr leading Cavall, Arthur's own dog. And all the warriors ranged themselves around the Nyver. And there came there the three sons of Cleddyf Divwlch, men who had gained much fame at the slaying of Yskithyrwyn Penbaedd; and they went on from Glyn Nyver, and came to Cwm Kerwyn.

And there Twrch Trwyth made a stand, and slew four of Arthur's champions, Gwarthegydd the son of Kaw, and Tarawc of Allt Clwyd, and Rheidwn the son of Eli Atver, and Iscovan Hael. And after he had slain these men, he made a second stand in the same place. And there he slew Gwydre the son of Arthur, and Garselit Wyddel, and Glew the son of Ysgawd, and Iscawyn the son of Panon; and there he himself was wounded.

And the next morning before it was day, some of the men came up with him. And he slew Huandaw, and Gogigwr, and Penpingon, three attendants upon Glewlwyd Gavaelvawr, so that Heaven knows he had not an attendant remaining, excepting only Llaesgevydd, a man from whom no one ever derived any good. And together with these he slew many of the men of that country, and Gwlyddyn Saer, Arthur's chief Architect.

Then Arthur overtook him at Pelumyawc, and there he slew Madawc the son of Teithyon, and Gwyn the son of Tringad, the son of Neved, and Eiryawn Penllorau. Thence he went to Aberteivi, where he made another stand, and where he slew Kyflas the son of Kynan, and Gwilenhin king of France. Then he went as far as Glyn Ystu, and there the men and the dogs lost him.

Then Arthur summoned unto him Gwyn ab Nudd, and he asked him if he knew aught of Twrch Trwyth. And he said that he did not.

And all the huntsmen went to hunt the swine as far as Dyffryn Llychwr. And Grugyn Gwallt Ereint and Llwydawg Govynnyad closed with them and killed all the huntsmen, so that there escaped but one man only. And Arthur and his hosts came to the place where Grugyn and Llwydawg were. And there he let loose the whole of the dogs upon them, and with the shout and barking that was set up, Twrch Trwyth came to their assistance.

And from the time that they came across the Irish sea, Arthur had never got sight of him until then. So he set men and dogs upon him, and

thereupon he started off and went to Mynydd Amanw. And there one of his young pigs was killed. Then they set upon him life for life, and Twrch Llawin was slain, and then there was slain another of the swine, Gwys was his name. After that he went on to Dyffryn Amanw, and there Banw and Bennwig were killed. Of all his pigs there went with him alive from that place none save Grugyn Gwallt Ereint and Llwydawg Govynnyad.

Thence he went on to Llwh Ewin, and Arthur overtook him there, and he made a stand. And there he slew Echel Forddwytwll, and Garwyli the son of Gwyddawg Gwyr, and many men and dogs likewise. And thence they went to Llwh Tawy. Grugyn Gwrych Ereint parted from them there, and went to Din Tywi. And thence he proceeded to Ceredigiawn, and Eli and Trachmyr with him, and a multitude likewise. Then he came to Garth Gregyn, and there Llwydawg Govynnyad fought in the midst of them, and slew Rhudvyw Rhys and many others with him. Then Llwydawg went thence to Ystrad Yw, and there the men of Armorica met him, and there he slew Hirpeissawg the king of Armorica, and Llygatrudd Emys, and Gwrbothu, Arthur's uncles, his mother's brothers, and there was he himself slain.

Twrch Trwyth went from there to between Tawy and Euyas, and Arthur summoned all Cornwall and Devon unto him, to the estuary of the Severn, and he said to the warriors of this Island, "Twrch Trwyth has slain many of my men, but, by the valour of warriors, while I live he shall not go into Cornwall. And I will not follow him any longer, but I will oppose him life to life. Do ye as ye will." And he resolved that he would send a body of knights, with the dogs of the Island, as far as Euyas, who should return thence to the Severn, and that tried warriors should traverse the Island, and force him into the Severn. And Mabon the son of Modron came up with him at the Severn, upon Gwynn Mygdwn, the horse of Gweddwn, and Goreu the son of Custennin, and Menw the son of Teirgwaedd; this was betwixt Llyn Lliwan and Aber Gwy. And Arthur fell upon him together with the champions of Britain. And Osla Kylllellvawr drew near, and Manawyddan the son of Llyr, and Kacmwri the servant of Arthur, and Gwyngelli, and they seized hold of him, catching him first by his feet, and plunged him in

the Severn, so that it overwhelmed him. On the one side, Mabon the son of Modron spurred his steed and snatched his razor from him, and Kyledyr Wyllt came up with him on the other side, upon another steed, in the Severn, and took from him the scissors. But before they could obtain the comb, he had regained the ground with his feet, and from the moment that he reached the shore, neither dog, nor man, nor horse could overtake him until he came to Cornwall. If they had had trouble in getting the jewels from him, much more had they in seeking to save the two men from being drowned. Kacmwri, as they drew him forth, was dragged by two millstones into the deep. And as Osla Kylllellvawr was running after the boar, his knife had dropped out of the sheath, and he had lost it, and after that, the sheath became full of water, and its weight drew him down into the deep, as they were drawing him forth.

Then Arthur and his hosts proceeded until they overtook the boar in Cornwall, and the trouble which they had met with before was mere play to what they encountered in seeking the comb. But from one difficulty to another, the comb was at length obtained. And then he was hunted from Cornwall, and driven straight forward into the deep sea. And thenceforth it was never known whither he went; and Aned and Aethlem with him. Then went Arthur to Gelli Wic, in Cornwall, to anoint himself, and to rest from his fatigues.

Said Arthur, "Is there any one of the marvels yet unobtained?" Said one of his men, "There is—the blood of the witch Orddu, the daughter of the witch Orwen, of Pen Nant Govid, on the confines of Hell." Arthur set forth towards the North, and came to the place where was the witch's cave. And Gwyn ab Nudd, and Gwythyr the son of Greidawl, counselled him to send Kacmwri, and Hygwyd his brother, to fight with the witch. And as they entered the cave, the witch seized upon them, and she caught Hygwyd by the hair of his head, and threw him on the floor beneath her. And Kacmwri caught her by the hair of her head, and dragged her to the earth from off Hygwyd, but she turned again upon them both, and drove them both out with kicks and with cuffs.

And Arthur was wroth at seeing his two attendants almost slain, and he sought to enter the cave; but Gwyn and Gwythyr said unto him, "It would not be fitting or seemly for us to see thee squabbling with a hag. Let Hiramreu and Hireidil go to the cave." So they went. But if great was the trouble of the first two that went, much greater was that of these two. And Heaven knows that not one of the four could move from the spot, until they placed them all upon Llamrei, Arthur's mare. And then Arthur rushed to the door of the cave, and at the door he struck at the witch, with Carnwennan his dagger, and clove her in twain, so that she fell in two parts. And Kaw, of North Britain, took the blood of the witch and kept it.

Then Kilhwch set forward, and Goreu the son of Custennin with him, and as many as wished ill to Yspaddaden Penkawr. And they took the marvels with them to his court. And Kaw of North Britain came and shaved his beard, skin, and flesh clean off to the very bone from ear to ear. "Art thou shaved, man?" said Kilhwch. "I am shaved," answered he. "Is thy daughter mine now?" "She is thine," said he, "but therefore needest thou not thank me, but Arthur who hath accomplished this for thee. By my free will thou shouldest never have had her, for with her I lose my life." Then Goreu the son of Custennin seized him by the hair of his head, and dragged him after him to the keep, and cut off his head and placed it on a stake on the citadel. Then they took possession of his castle, and of his treasures.

And that night Olwen became Kilhwch's bride, and she continued to be his wife as long as she lived. And the hosts of Arthur dispersed themselves, each man to his own country. And thus did Kilhwch obtain Olwen, the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr.

## **The Dream of Rhonabwy**

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Madawc the son of Maredudd possessed Powys within its boundaries, from Porfoed to Gwauan in the uplands of Arwystli. And at that time he had a brother, Iorwerth the son of Maredudd, in rank not equal to himself. And Iorwerth had great sorrow and heaviness because of the honour and power

that his brother enjoyed, which he shared not. And he sought his fellows and his foster-brothers, and took counsel with them what he should do in this matter. And they resolved to dispatch some of their number to go and seek a maintenance for him. Then Madawc offered him to become Master of the Household and to have horses, and arms, and honour, and to fare like as himself. But Iorwerth refused this.

And Iorwerth made an inroad into Loegria, slaying the inhabitants, and burning houses, and carrying away prisoners. And Madawc took counsel with the men of Powys, and they determined to place an hundred men in each of the three Commots of Powys to seek for him. And thus did they in the plains of Powys from Aber Ceirawc, and in Allictwn Ver, and in Rhyd Wilure, on the Vyrnwy, the three best Commots of Powys. So he was none the better, he nor his household, in Powys, nor in the plains thereof. And they spread these men over the plains as far as Nillystwn Trevan.

Now one of the men who was upon this quest was called Rhonabwy. And Rhonabwy and Kynwrig Vrychgoch, a man of Mawddwy, and Cadwgan Vras, a man of Moelvre in Kynlleith, came together to the house of Heilyn Goch the son of Cadwgan the son of Iddon. And when they came near to the house, they saw an old hall, very black and having an upright gable, whence issued a great smoke; and on entering, they found the floor full of puddles and mounds; and it was difficult to stand thereon, so slippery was it with the mire of cattle. And where the puddles were, a man might go up to his ankles in water and dirt. And there were boughs of holly spread over the floor, whereof the cattle had browsed the sprigs. When they came to the hall of the house, they beheld cells full of dust, and very gloomy, and on one side an old hag making a fire. And whenever she felt cold, she cast a lapful of chaff upon the fire, and raised such a smoke, that it was scarcely to be borne, as it rose up the nostrils. And on the other side was a yellow calf-skin on the floor; a main privilege was it to any one who should get upon that hide.

And when they had sat down, they asked the hag where were the people of the house. And the hag spoke not, but muttered. Thereupon behold the people of the house entered; a ruddy, clownish, curly-headed man, with a

burthen of faggots on his back, and a pale slender woman, also carrying a bundle under her arm. And they barely welcomed the men, and kindled a fire with the boughs. And the woman cooked something, and gave them to eat, barley bread, and cheese, and milk and water.

And there arose a storm of wind and rain, so that it was hardly possible to go forth with safety. And being weary with their journey, they laid themselves down and sought to sleep. And when they looked at the couch, it seemed to be made but of a little coarse straw full of dust and vermin, with the stems of boughs sticking up there-through, for the cattle had eaten all the straw that was placed at the head and the foot. And upon it was stretched an old russet-coloured rug, threadbare and ragged; and a coarse sheet, full of slits, was upon the rug, and an ill-stuffed pillow, and a worn-out cover upon the sheet. And after much suffering from the vermin, and from the discomfort of their couch, a heavy sleep fell on Rhonabwy's companions. But Rhonabwy, not being able either to sleep or to rest, thought he should suffer less if he went to lie upon the yellow calf-skin that was stretched out on the floor. And there he slept.

As soon as sleep had come upon his eyes, it seemed to him that he was journeying with his companions across the plain of Argyngroeg, and he thought that he went towards Rhyd y Groes on the Severn. As he journeyed, he heard a mighty noise, the like whereof heard he never before; and looking behind him, he beheld a youth with yellow curling hair, and with his beard newly trimmed, mounted on a chestnut horse, whereof the legs were grey from the top of the forelegs, and from the bend of the hindlegs downwards. And the rider wore a coat of yellow satin sewn with green silk, and on his thigh was a gold-hilted sword, with a scabbard of new leather of Cordova, belted with the skin of the deer, and clasped with gold. And over this was a scarf of yellow satin wrought with green silk, the borders whereof were likewise green. And the green of the caparison of the horse, and of his rider, was as green as the leaves of the fir-tree, and the yellow was as yellow as the blossom of the broom. So fierce was the aspect of the knight, that fear seized upon them, and they began to flee. And the knight pursued them. And when the horse breathed forth, the men became distant



from him, and when he drew in his breath, they were drawn near to him, even to the horse's chest. And when he had overtaken them, they besought his mercy. "You have it gladly," said he, "fear nought." "Ha, chieftain, since thou hast mercy upon me, tell me also who thou art," said Rhonabwy. "I will not conceal my lineage from thee, I am Iddawc the son of Mynyddog, yet not by my name, but by my nickname am I best known." "And wilt thou tell us what thy nickname is?" "I will tell you; it is Iddawc Cordd Prydain." "Ha, chieftain," said Rhonabwy, "why art thou called thus?" "I will tell thee. I was one of the messengers between Arthur and Medrawd his nephew, at the battle of Camlan; and I was then a reckless youth, and through my desire for battle, I kindled strife between them, and stirred up wrath, when I was sent by Arthur the Emperor to reason with Medrawd, and to show him, that he was his foster-father and his uncle, and to seek for peace, lest the sons of the Kings of the Island of Britain, and of the nobles, should be slain. And whereas Arthur charged me with the fairest sayings he could think of, I uttered unto Medrawd the harshest I could devise. And therefore am I called Iddawc Cordd Prydain, for from this did the battle of Camlan ensue. And three nights before the end of the battle of Camlan I left them, and went to the Llech Las in North Britain to do penance. And there I remained doing penance seven years, and after that I gained pardon."

Then lo! they heard a mighty sound which was much louder than that which they had heard before, and when they looked round towards the sound, they beheld a ruddy youth, without beard or whiskers, noble of mien, and mounted on a stately courser. And from the shoulders and the front of the knees downwards the horse was bay. And upon the man was a dress of red satin wrought with yellow silk, and yellow were the borders of his scarf. And such parts of his apparel and of the trappings of his horse as were yellow, as yellow were they as the blossom of the broom, and such as were red, were as ruddy as the ruddiest blood in the world.

Then, behold the horseman overtook them, and he asked of Iddawc a share of the little men that were with him. "That which is fitting for me to grant I will grant, and thou shalt be a companion to them as I have been."

And the horseman went away. "Iddawc," inquired Rhonabwy, "who was that horseman?" "Rhuvawn Pebyr the son of Prince Deorthach."

And they journeyed over the plain of Argyngroeg as far as the ford of Rhyd y Groes on the Severn. And for a mile around the ford on both sides of the road, they saw tents and encampments, and there was the clamour of a mighty host. And they came to the edge of the ford, and there they beheld Arthur sitting on a flat island below the ford, having Bedwini the Bishop on one side of him, and Gwarthegydd the son of Kaw on the other. And a tall, auburn-haired youth stood before him, with his sheathed sword in his hand, and clad in a coat and cap of jet-black satin. And his face was white as ivory, and his eyebrows black as jet, and such part of his wrist as could be seen between his glove and his sleeve, was whiter than the lily, and thicker than a warrior's ankle.

Then came Iddawc and they that were with him, and stood before Arthur and saluted him. "Heaven grant thee good," said Arthur. "And where, Iddawc, didst thou find these little men?" "I found them, lord, up yonder on the road." Then the Emperor smiled. "Lord," said Iddawc, "wherefore dost thou laugh?" "Iddawc," replied Arthur, "I laugh not; but it pitieth me that men of such stature as these should have this island in their keeping, after the men that guarded it of yore." Then said Iddawc, "Rhonabwy, dost thou see the ring with a stone set in it, that is upon the Emperor's hand?" "I see it," he answered. "It is one of the properties of that stone to enable thee to remember that thou seest here to-night, and hadst thou not seen the stone, thou wouldest never have been able to remember aught thereof."

After this they saw a troop coming towards the ford. "Iddawc," inquired Rhonabwy, "to whom does yonder troop belong?" "They are the fellows of Rhuvawn Pebyr the son of Prince Deorthach. And these men are honourably served with mead and bragget, and are freely beloved by the daughters of the kings of the Island of Britain. And this they merit, for they were ever in the front and the rear in every peril." And he saw but one hue upon the men and the horses of this troop, for they were all as red as blood. And when one of the knights rode forth from the troop, he looked like a

pillar of fire glancing athwart the sky. And this troop encamped above the ford.

Then they beheld another troop coming towards the ford, and these from their horses' chests upwards were whiter than the lily, and below blacker than jet. And they saw one of these knights go before the rest, and spur his horse into the ford in such a manner that the water dashed over Arthur and the Bishop, and those holding counsel with them, so that they were as wet as if they had been drenched in the river. And as he turned the head of his horse, the youth who stood before Arthur struck the horse over the nostrils with his sheathed sword, so that, had it been with the bare blade, it would have been a marvel if the bone had not been wounded as well as the flesh. And the knight drew his sword half out of the scabbard, and asked of him, "Wherefore didst thou strike my horse? Whether was it in insult or in counsel unto me?" "Thou dost indeed lack counsel. What madness caused thee to ride so furiously as to dash the water of the ford over Arthur, and the consecrated Bishop, and their counsellors, so that they were as wet as if they had been dragged out of the river?" "As counsel then will I take it." So he turned his horse's head round towards his army.

"Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "who was yonder knight?" "The most eloquent and the wisest youth that is in this island; Adaon, the son of Taliesin." "Who was the man that struck his horse?" "A youth of froward nature; Elphin, the son of Gwyddno."

Then spake a tall and stately man, of noble and flowing speech, saying that it was a marvel that so vast a host should be assembled in so narrow a space, and that it was a still greater marvel that those should be there at that time who had promised to be by mid-day in the battle of Badon, fighting with Osla Gyllellvawr. "Whether thou mayest choose to proceed or not, I will proceed." "Thou sayest well," said Arthur, "and we will go altogether." "Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "who was the man who spoke so marvellously unto Arthur erewhile?" "A man who may speak as boldly as he listeth, Caradawc Vreichvras, the son of Llyr Marini, his chief counsellor and his cousin."

Then Iddawc took Rhonabwy behind him on his horse, and that mighty host moved forward, each troop in its order, towards Cevndigoll. And when they came to the middle of the ford of the Severn, Iddawc turned his horse's head, and Rhonabwy looked along the valley of the Severn. And he beheld two fair troops coming towards the ford. One troop there came of brilliant white, whereof every one of the men had a scarf of white satin with jet-black borders. And the knees and the tops of the shoulders of their horses were jet-black, though they were of a pure white in every other part. And their banners were pure white, with black points to them all.

"Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "who are yonder pure white troop?" "They are the men of Norway, and March the son of Meirchion is their prince. And he is cousin unto Arthur." And further on he saw a troop, whereof each man wore garments of jet-black, with borders of pure white to every scarf; and the tops of the shoulders and the knees of their horses were pure white. And their banners were jet-black with pure white at the point of each.

"Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "who are the jet-black troop yonder?" "They are the men of Denmark, and Edeyrn the son of Nudd is their prince."

And when they had overtaken the host, Arthur and his army of mighty ones dismounted below Caer Badou, and he perceived that he and Iddawc journeyed the same road as Arthur. And after they had dismounted he heard a great tumult and confusion amongst the host, and such as were then at the flanks turned to the centre, and such as had been in the centre moved to the flanks. And then, behold, he saw a knight coming, clad, both he and his horse, in mail, of which the rings were whiter than the whitest lily, and the rivets redder than the ruddiest blood. And he rode amongst the host.

"Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "will yonder host flee?" "King Arthur never fled, and if this discourse of thine were heard, thou wert a lost man. But as to the knight whom thou seest yonder, it is Kai. The fairest horseman is Kai in all Arthur's Court; and the men who are at the front of the army hasten to the rear to see Kai ride, and the men who are in the centre flee to the side, from the shock of his horse. And this is the cause of the confusion of the host."

Thereupon they heard a call made for Kadwr, Earl of Cornwall, and behold he arose with the sword of Arthur in his hand. And the similitude of two serpents was upon the sword in gold. And when the sword was drawn from its scabbard, it seemed as if two flames of fire burst forth from the jaws of the serpents, and then, so wonderful was the sword, that it was hard for any one to look upon it. And the host became still, and the tumult ceased, and the Earl returned to the tent.

“Iddawc,” said Rhonabwy, “who is the man who bore the sword of Arthur?” “Kadwr, the Earl of Cornwall, whose duty it is to arm the King on the days of battle and warfare.”

And they heard a call made for Eiryngwch Amheibyn, Arthur’s servant, a red, rough, ill-favoured man, having red whiskers with bristly hairs. And behold he came upon a tall red horse with the mane parted on each side, and he brought with him a large and beautiful sumpter pack. And the huge red youth dismounted before Arthur, and he drew a golden chair out of the pack, and a carpet of diapered satin. And he spread the carpet before Arthur, and there was an apple of ruddy gold at each corner thereof, and he placed the chair upon the carpet. And so large was the chair that three armed warriors might have sat therein. Gwenn was the name of the carpet, and it was one of its properties that whoever was upon it no one could see him, and he could see every one. And it would retain no colour but its own.

And Arthur sat within the carpet, and Owain the son of Urien was standing before him. “Owain,” said Arthur, “wilt thou play chess?” “I will, Lord,” said Owain. And the red youth brought the chess for Arthur and Owain; golden pieces and a board of silver. And they began to play.

And while they were thus, and when they were best amused with their game, behold they saw a white tent with a red canopy, and the figure of a jet-black serpent on the top of the tent, and red glaring venomous eyes in the head of the serpent, and a red flaming tongue. And there came a young page with yellow curling hair, and blue eyes, and a newly-springing beard, wearing a coat and a surcoat of yellow satin, and hose of thin greenish-yellow cloth upon his feet, and over his hose shoes of parti-coloured leather, fastened at the insteps with golden clasps. And he bore a heavy three-edged

sword with a golden hilt, in a scabbard of black leather tipped with fine gold. And he came to the place where the Emperor and Owain were playing at chess.

And the youth saluted Owain. And Owain marvelled that the youth should salute him and should not have saluted the Emperor Arthur. And Arthur knew what was in Owain's thought. And he said to Owain, "Marvel not that the youth salutes thee now, for he saluted me erewhile; and it is unto thee that his errand is." Then said the youth unto Owain, "Lord, is it with thy leave that the young pages and attendants of the Emperor harass and torment and worry thy Ravens? And if it be not with thy leave, cause the Emperor to forbid them." "Lord," said Owain, "thou hearest what the youth says; if it seem good to thee, forbid them from my Ravens." "Play thy game," said he. Then the youth returned to the tent.

That game did they finish, and another they began, and when they were in the midst of the game, behold, a ruddy young man with auburn curling hair and large eyes, well-grown, and having his beard new-shorn, came forth from a bright yellow tent, upon the summit of which was the figure of a bright red lion. And he was clad in a coat of yellow satin, falling as low as the small of his leg, and embroidered with threads of red silk. And on his feet were hose of fine white buckram, and buskins of black leather were over his hose, whereon were golden clasps. And in his hand a huge, heavy, three-edged sword, with a scabbard of red deer-hide, tipped with gold. And he came to the place where Arthur and Owain were playing at chess. And he saluted him. And Owain was troubled at his salutation, but Arthur minded it no more than before. And the youth said unto Owain, "Is it not against thy will that the attendants of the Emperor harass thy Ravens, killing some and worrying others? If against thy will it be, beseech him to forbid them." "Lord," said Owain, "forbid thy men, if it seem good to thee." "Play thy game," said the Emperor. And the youth returned to the tent.

And that game was ended and another begun. And as they were beginning the first move of the game, they beheld at a small distance from them a tent speckled yellow, the largest ever seen, and the figure of an eagle of gold upon it, and a precious stone on the eagle's head. And coming out of

the tent, they saw a youth with thick yellow hair upon his head, fair and comely, and a scarf of blue satin upon him, and a brooch of gold in the scarf upon his right shoulder as large as a warrior's middle finger. And upon his feet were hose of fine Totness, and shoes of parti-coloured leather, clasped with gold, and the youth was of noble bearing, fair of face, with ruddy cheeks and large hawk's eyes. In the hand of the youth was a mighty lance, speckled yellow, with a newly-sharpened head; and upon the lance a banner displayed.

Fiercely angry, and with rapid pace, came the youth to the place where Arthur was playing at chess with Owain. And they perceived that he was wroth. And thereupon he saluted Owain, and told him that his Ravens had been killed, the chief part of them, and that such of them as were not slain were so wounded and bruised that not one of them could raise its wings a single fathom above the earth. "Lord," said Owain, "forbid thy men." "Play," said he, "if it please thee." Then said Owain to the youth, "Go back, and wherever thou findest the strife at the thickest, there lift up the banner, and let come what pleases Heaven."

So the youth returned back to the place where the strife bore hardest upon the Ravens, and he lifted up the banner; and as he did so they all rose up in the air, wrathful and fierce and high of spirit, clapping their wings in the wind, and shaking off the weariness that was upon them. And recovering their energy and courage, furiously and with exultation did they, with one sweep, descend upon the heads of the men, who had erewhile caused them anger and pain and damage, and they seized some by the heads and others by the eyes, and some by the ears, and others by the arms, and carried them up into the air; and in the air there was a mighty tumult with the flapping of the wings of the triumphant Ravens, and with their croaking; and there was another mighty tumult with the groaning of the men, that were being torn and wounded, and some of whom were slain.

And Arthur and Owain marvelled at the tumult as they played at chess; and, looking, they perceived a knight upon a dun-coloured horse coming towards them. And marvellous was the hue of the dun horse. Bright red was his right shoulder, and from the top of his legs to the centre of his hoof was

bright yellow. Both the knight and his horse were fully equipped with heavy foreign armour. The clothing of the horse from the front opening upwards was of bright red sendal, and from thence opening downwards was of bright yellow sendal. A large gold-hilted one-edged sword had the youth upon his thigh, in a scabbard of light blue, and tipped with Spanish laton. The belt of the sword was of dark green leather with golden slides and a clasp of ivory upon it, and a buckle of jet-black upon the clasp. A helmet of gold was on the head of the knight, set with precious stones of great virtue, and at the top of the helmet was the image of a flame-coloured leopard with two ruby-red stones in its head, so that it was astounding for a warrior, however stout his heart, to look at the face of the leopard, much more at the face of the knight. He had in his hand a blue-shafted lance, but from the haft to the point it was stained crimson-red with the blood of the Ravens and their plumage.

The knight came to the place where Arthur and Owain were seated at chess. And they perceived that he was harassed and vexed and weary as he came towards them. And the youth saluted Arthur, and told him that the Ravens of Owain were slaying his young men and attendants. And Arthur looked at Owain and said, "Forbid thy Ravens." "Lord," answered Owain, "play thy game." And they played. And the knight returned back towards the strife, and the Ravens were not forbidden any more than before.

And when they had played awhile, they heard a mighty tumult, and a wailing of men, and a croaking of Ravens, as they carried the men in their strength into the air, and, tearing them betwixt them, let them fall piecemeal to the earth. And during the tumult they saw a knight coming towards them, on a light grey horse, and the left foreleg of the horse was jet-black to the centre of his hoof. And the knight and the horse were fully accoutred with huge heavy blue armour. And a robe of honour of yellow diapered satin was upon the knight, and the borders of the robe were blue. And the housings of the horse were jet-black, with borders of bright yellow. And on the thigh of the youth was a sword, long, and three-edged, and heavy. And the scabbard was of red cut leather, and the belt of new red deer-skin, having upon it many golden slides and a buckle of the bone of the sea-horse, the tongue of



which was jet-black. A golden helmet was upon the head of the knight, wherein were set sapphire-stones of great virtue. And at the top of the helmet was the figure of a flame-coloured lion, with a fiery-red tongue, issuing above a foot from his mouth, and with venomous eyes, crimson-red, in his head. And the knight came, bearing in his hand a thick ashen lance, the head whereof, which had been newly steeped in blood, was overlaid with silver.

And the youth saluted the Emperor: "Lord," said he, "carest thou not for the slaying of thy pages, and thy young men, and the sons of the nobles of the Island of Britain, whereby it will be difficult to defend this island from henceforward for ever?" "Owain," said Arthur, "forbid thy Ravens." "Play this game, Lord," said Owain.

So they finished the game and began another; and as they were finishing that game, lo, they heard a great tumult and a clamour of armed men, and a croaking of Ravens, and a flapping of wings in the air, as they flung down the armour entire to the ground, and the men and the horses piecemeal. Then they saw coming a knight on a lofty-headed piebald horse. And the left shoulder of the horse was of bright red, and its right leg from the chest to the hollow of the hoof was pure white. And the knight and horse were equipped with arms of speckled yellow, variegated with Spanish laton. And there was a robe of honour upon him, and upon his horse, divided in two parts, white and black, and the borders of the robe of honour were of golden purple. And above the robe he wore a sword three-edged and bright, with a golden hilt. And the belt of the sword was of yellow goldwork, having a clasp upon it of the eyelid of a black sea-horse, and a tongue of yellow gold to the clasp. Upon the head of the knight was a bright helmet of yellow laton, with sparkling stones of crystal in it, and at the crest of the helmet was the figure of a griffin, with a stone of many virtues in its head. And he had an ashen spear in his hand, with a round shaft, coloured with azure blue. And the head of the spear was newly stained with blood, and was overlaid with fine silver.

Wrathfully came the knight to the place where Arthur was, and he told him that the Ravens had slain his household and the sons of the chief men

of this island, and he besought him to cause Owain to forbid his Ravens. And Arthur besought Owain to forbid them. Then Arthur took the golden chessmen that were upon the board, and crushed them until they became as dust. Then Owain ordered Gwres the son of Rheged to lower his banner. So it was lowered, and all was peace.

Then Rhonabwy inquired of Iddawc who were the first three men that came to Owain, to tell him his Ravens were being slain. Said Iddawc, "They were men who grieved that Owain should suffer loss, his fellow-chieftains and companions, Selyv the son of Kynan Garwyn of Powys, and Gwgawn Gleddyvrudd, and Gwres the son of Rheged, he who bears the banner in the day of battle and strife." "Who," said Rhonabwy, "were the last three men who came to Arthur, and told him that the Ravens were slaughtering his men?" "The best of men," said Iddawc, "and the bravest, and who would grieve exceedingly that Arthur should have damage in aught; Blathaon the son of Mawrheth, and Rhuvawn Pebyr the son of Prince Deorthach, and Hyveidd Unllenn."

And with that behold four-and-twenty knights came from Osla Gyllellvawr, to crave a truce of Arthur for a fortnight and a month. And Arthur rose and went to take counsel. And he came to where a tall, auburn, curly-headed man was a little way off, and there he assembled his counsellors. Bedwini, the Bishop, and Gwarthegydd the son of Kaw, and March the son of Meirchawn, and Caradawc Vreichvras, and Gwalchmai the son of Gwyar, and Edeyrn the son of Nudd, and Rhuvawn Pebyr the son of Prince Deorthach, and Rhiogan the son of the King of Ireland, and Gwenwynwyn the son of Nav, Howel the son of Emyr Llydaw, Gwilym the son of Rhwyf Freinc, and Daned the son of Ath, and Goreu Custennin, and Mabon the son of Modron, and Peredur Paladur Hir, and Hyveidd Unllenn, and Twrch the son of Perif, and Nerth the son of Kadarn, and Gobrwyl the son of Echel Vorddwyttwll, Gwair the son of Gwestyl, and Gadwy the son of Geraint, Trystan the son of Tallwch, Moryen Manawc, Granwen the son of Llyr, and Llacheu the son of Arthur, and Llawvrodedd Varvawc, and Kadwr Earl of Cornwall, Morvran the son of Tegid, and Rhyawd the son of Morgant, and Dyvyr the son of Alun Dyved, Gwrhyr Gwalstawd Ieithoedd,

Adaon the son of Taliesin, Llary the son of Kasnar Wledig, and Fflewddur Fflam, and Greidawl Galldovydd, Gilbert the son of Kadgyffro, Menw the son of Teirgwaedd, Gwrthmwl Wledig, Cawrdav the son of Caradawc Vreichvras, Gildas the son of Kaw, Kadyriaith the son of Saidi, and many of the men of Norway and Denmark, and many of the men of Greece, and a crowd of the men of the host came to that council.

“Iddawc,” said Rhonabwy, “who was the auburn haired man to whom they came just now?” “Rhun the son of Maelgwn Gwynedd, a man whose prerogative it is, that he may join in counsel with all.” “And wherefore did they admit into counsel with men of such dignity as are yonder a stripling so young as Kadyriaith the son of Saidi?” “Because there is not throughout Britain a man better skilled in counsel than he.”

Thereupon, behold, bards came and recited verses before Arthur, and no man understood those verses but Kadyriaith only, save that they were in Arthur’s praise.

And lo, there came four-and-twenty asses with their burdens of gold and of silver, and a tired way-worn man with each of them, bringing tribute to Arthur from the Islands of Greece. Then Kadyriaith the son of Saidi besought that a truce might be granted to Osla Gyllellvawr for the space of a fortnight and a month, and that the asses and the burdens they carried might be given to the bards, to be to them as the reward for their stay and that their verse might be recompensed during the time of the truce. And thus it was settled.

“Rhonabwy,” said Iddawc, “would it not be wrong to forbid a youth who can give counsel so liberal as this from coming to the councils of his Lord?”

Then Kai arose, and he said, “Whosoever will follow Arthur, let him be with him to-night in Cornwall, and whosoever will not, let him be opposed to Arthur even during the truce.” And through the greatness of the tumult that ensued, Rhonabwy awoke. And when he awoke he was upon the yellow calf-skin, having slept three nights and three days.

And this tale is called the Dream of Rhonabwy. And this is the reason that no one knows the dream without a book, neither bard nor gifted seer;

because of the various colours that were upon the horses, and the many wondrous colours of the arms and of the panoply, and of the precious scarfs, and of the virtue-bearing stones.

# Pwyll Prince of Dyved

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Pwyll Prince of Dyved was lord of the seven Cantreys of Dyved; and once upon a time he was at Narberth his chief palace, and he was minded to go and hunt, and the part of his dominions in which it pleased him to hunt was Glyn Cuch. So he set forth from Narbeth that night, and went as far as Llwyn Diarwyd. And that night he tarried there, and early on the morrow he rose and came to Glyn Cuch, when he let loose the dogs in the wood, and sounded the horn, and began the chase. And as he followed the dogs, he lost his companions; and whilst he listened to the hounds, he heard the cry of other hounds, a cry different from his own, and coming in the opposite direction.

And he beheld a glade in the wood forming a level plain, and as his dogs came to the edge of the glade, he saw a stag before the other dogs. And lo, as it reached the middle of the glade, the dogs that followed the stag overtook it and brought it down. Then looked he at the colour of the dogs, staying not to look at the stag, and of all the hounds that he had seen in the world, he had never seen any that were like unto these. For their hair was of a brilliant shining white, and their ears were red; and as the whiteness of their bodies shone, so did the redness of their ears glisten. And he came towards the dogs, and drove away those that had brought down the stag, and set his own dogs upon it.

And as he was setting on his dogs he saw a horseman coming towards him upon a large light-grey steed, with a hunting horn round his neck, and clad in garments of grey woollen in the fashion of a hunting garb. And the horseman drew near and spoke unto him thus. "Chieftain," said he, "I know who thou art, and I greet thee not." "Peradventure," said Pwyll, "thou art of such dignity that thou shouldest not do so." "Verily," answered he, "it is not my dignity that prevents me." "What is it then, O Chieftain?" asked he. "By Heaven, it is by reason of thine own ignorance and want of courtesy." "What discourtesy, Chieftain, hast thou seen in me?" "Greater discourtesy

saw I never in man,” said he, “than to drive away the dogs that were killing the stag and to set upon it thine own. This was discourteous, and though I may not be revenged upon thee, yet I declare to Heaven that I will do thee more dishonour than the value of an hundred stags.” “O Chieftain,” he replied, “if I have done ill I will redeem thy friendship.” “How wilt thou redeem it?” “According as thy dignity may be, but I know not who thou art?” “A crowned king am I in the land whence I come.” “Lord,” said he, “may the day prosper with thee, and from what land comest thou?” “From Annwvyn,”<sup>3</sup> answered he; “Arawn, a King of Annwvyn, am I.” “Lord,” said he, “how may I gain thy friendship?” “After this manner mayest thou,” he said. “There is a man whose dominions are opposite to mine, who is ever warring against me, and he is Havgan, a King of Annwvyn, and by ridding me of this oppression, which thou canst easily do, shalt thou gain my friendship.” “Gladly will I do this,” said he. “Show me how I may.” “I will show thee. Behold thus it is thou mayest. I will make firm friendship with thee; and this will I do. I will send thee to Annwvyn in my stead, and I will give thee the fairest lady thou didst ever behold to be thy companion, and I will put my form and semblance upon thee, so that not a page of the chamber, nor an officer, nor any other man that has always followed me shall know that it is not I. And this shall be for the space of a year from tomorrow, and then we will meet in this place.” “Yes,” said he; “but when I shall have been there for the space of a year, by what means shall I discover him of whom thou speakest?” “One year from this night,” he answered, “is the time fixed between him and me that we should meet at the Ford; be thou there in my likeness, and with one stroke that thou givest him, he shall no longer live. And if he ask thee to give him another, give it not, how much soever he may entreat thee, for when I did so, he fought with me next day as well as ever before.” “Verily,” said Pwyll, “what shall I do concerning my kingdom?” Said Arawn, “I will cause that no one in all thy dominions, neither man nor woman, shall know that I am not thou, and I will go there in thy stead.” “Gladly then,” said Pwyll, “will I set forward.” “Clear shall be thy path, and nothing shall detain thee, until thou come into my dominions, and I myself will be thy guide!”

So he conducted him until he came in sight of the palace and its dwellings. "Behold," said he, "the Court and the kingdom in thy power. Enter the Court, there is no one there who will know thee, and when thou seest what service is done there, thou wilt know the customs of the Court."

So he went forward to the Court, and when he came there, he beheld sleeping-rooms, and halls, and chambers, and the most beautiful buildings ever seen. And he went into the hall to disarray, and there came youths and pages and disarrayed him, and all as they entered saluted him. And two knights came and drew his hunting-dress from about him, and clothed him in a vesture of silk and gold. And the hall was prepared, and behold he saw the household and the host enter in, and the host was the most comely and the best equipped that he had ever seen. And with them came in likewise the Queen, who was the fairest woman that he had ever yet beheld. And she had on a yellow robe of shining satin; and they washed and went to the table, and sat, the Queen upon one side of him, and one who seemed to be an Earl on the other side.

And he began to speak with the Queen, and he thought, from her speech, that she was the seemliest and most noble lady of converse and of cheer that ever was. And they partook of meat, and drink, with songs and with feasting; and of all the Courts upon the earth, behold this was the best supplied with food and drink, and vessels of gold and royal jewels.

And the year he spent in hunting, and minstrelsy, and feasting, and diversions, and discourse with his companions until the night that was fixed for the conflict. And when that night came, it was remembered even by those who lived in the furthest part of his dominions, and he went to the meeting, and the nobles of the kingdom with him. And when he came to the Ford, a knight arose and spake thus. "Lords," said he, "listen well. It is between two kings that this meeting is, and between them only. Each claimeth of the other his land and territory, and do all of you stand aside and leave the fight to be between them."

Thereupon the two kings approached each other in the middle of the Ford, and encountered, and at the first thrust, the man who was in the stead of Arawn struck Havgan on the centre of the boss of his shield, so that it

was cloven in twain, and his armour was broken, and Havgan himself was borne to the ground an arm's and a spear's length over the crupper of his horse, and he received a deadly blow. "O Chieftain," said Havgan, "what right hast thou to cause my death? I was not injuring thee in anything, and I know not wherefore thou wouldest slay me. But, for the love of Heaven, since thou hast begun to slay me, complete thy work." "Ah, Chieftain," he replied, "I may yet repent doing that unto thee, slay thee who may, I will not do so." "My trusty Lords," said Havgan, "bear me hence. My death has come. I shall be no more able to uphold you." "My Nobles," also said he who was in the semblance of Arawn, "take counsel and know who ought to be my subjects." "Lord," said the Nobles, "all should be, for there is no king over the whole of Annwvyn but thee." "Yes," he replied, "it is right that he who comes humbly should be received graciously, but he that doth not come with obedience, shall be compelled by the force of swords." And thereupon he received the homage of the men, and he began to conquer the country; and the next day by noon the two kingdoms were in his power. And thereupon he went to keep his tryst, and came to Glyn Cuch.

And when he came there, the King of Annwvyn was there to meet him, and each of them was rejoiced to see the other. "Verily," said Arawn, "may Heaven reward thee for thy friendship towards me. I have heard of it. When thou comest thyself to thy dominions," said he, "thou wilt see that which I have done for thee." "Whatever thou hast done for me, may Heaven repay it thee."

Then Arawn gave to Pwyll Prince of Dyved his proper form and semblance, and he himself took his own; and Arawn set forth towards the Court of Annwvyn; and he was rejoiced when he beheld his hosts, and his household, whom he had not seen so long; but they had not known of his absence, and wondered no more at his coming than usual. And that day was spent in joy and merriment; and he sat and conversed with his wife and his nobles. And when it was time for them rather to sleep than to carouse, they went to rest.

Pwyll Prince of Dyved came likewise to his country and dominions, and began to inquire of the nobles of the land, how his rule had been during the



past year, compared with what it had been before. "Lord," said they, "thy wisdom was never so great, and thou wast never so kind or so free in bestowing thy gifts, and thy justice was never more worthily seen than in this year." "By Heaven," said he, "for all the good you have enjoyed, you should thank him who hath been with you; for behold, thus hath this matter been." And thereupon Pwyll related the whole unto them. "Verily, Lord," said they, "render thanks unto Heaven that thou hast such a fellowship, and withhold not from us the rule which we have enjoyed for this year past." "I take Heaven to witness that I will not withhold it," answered Pwyll.

And thenceforth they made strong the friendship that was between them, and each sent unto the other horses, and greyhounds, and hawks, and all such jewels as they thought would be pleasing to each other. And by reason of his having dwelt that year in Annwvyn, and having ruled there so prosperously, and united the two kingdoms in one day by his valour and prowess, he lost the name of Pwyll Prince of Dyved, and was called Pwyll Chief of Annwvyn from that time forward.

Once upon a time, Pwyll was at Narberth his chief palace, where a feast had been prepared for him, and with him was a great host of men. And after the first meal, Pwyll arose to walk, and he went to the top of a mound that was above the palace, and was called Gorsedd Arberth. "Lord," said one of the Court, "it is peculiar to the mound that whosoever sits upon it cannot go thence, without either receiving wounds or blows, or else seeing a wonder." "I fear not to receive wounds and blows in the midst of such a host as this, but as to the wonder, gladly would I see it. I will go therefore and sit upon the mound."

And upon the mound he sat. And while he sat there, they saw a lady, on a pure white horse of large size, with a garment of shining gold around her, coming along the highway that led from the mound; and the horse seemed to move at a slow and even pace, and to be coming up towards the mound. "My men," said Pwyll, "is there any among you who knows yonder lady?" "There is not, Lord," said they. "Go one of you and meet her, that we may know who she is." And one of them arose, and as he came upon the road to meet her, she passed by, and he followed as fast as he could, being on foot;

and the greater was his speed, the further was she from him. And when he saw that it profited him nothing to follow her, he returned to Pwyll, and said unto him, "Lord, it is idle for any one in the world to follow her on foot." "Verily," said Pwyll, "go unto the palace, and take the fleetest horse that thou seest, and go after her."

And he took a horse and went forward. And he came to an open level plain, and put spurs to his horse; and the more he urged his horse, the further was she from him. Yet she held the same pace as at first. And his horse began to fail; and when his horse's feet failed him, he returned to the place where Pwyll was. "Lord," said he, "it will avail nothing for any one to follow yonder lady. I know of no horse in these realms swifter than this, and it availed me not to pursue her." "Of a truth," said Pwyll, "there must be some illusion here. Let us go towards the palace." So to the palace they went, and they spent that day. And the next day they arose, and that also they spent until it was time to go to meat. And after the first meal, "Verily," said Pwyll, "we will go the same party as yesterday to the top of the mound. And do thou," said he to one of his young men, "take the swiftest horse that thou knowest in the field." And thus did the young man. And they went towards the mound, taking the horse with them. And as they were sitting down they beheld the lady on the same horse, and in the same apparel, coming along the same road. "Behold," said Pwyll, "here is the lady of yesterday. Make ready, youth, to learn who she is." "My lord," said he, "that will I gladly do." And thereupon the lady came opposite to them. So the youth mounted his horse; and before he had settled himself in his saddle, she passed by, and there was a clear space between them. But her speed was no greater than it had been the day before. Then he put his horse into an amble, and thought that notwithstanding the gentle pace at which his horse went, he should soon overtake her. But this availed him not; so he gave his horse the reins. And still he came no nearer to her than when he went at a foot's pace. And the more he urged his horse, the further was she from him. Yet she rode not faster than before. When he saw that it availed not to follow her, he returned to the place where Pwyll was. "Lord," said he, "the horse can no more than thou hast seen." "I see indeed that it avails not

that any one should follow her. And by Heaven," said he, "she must needs have an errand to some one in this plain, if her haste would allow her to declare it. Let us go back to the palace." And to the palace they went, and they spent that night in songs and feasting, as it pleased them.

And the next day they amused themselves until it was time to go to meat. And when meat was ended, Pwyll said, "Where are the hosts that went yesterday and the day before to the top of the mound?" "Behold, Lord, we are here," said they. "Let us go," said he, "to the mound, to sit there. And do thou," said he to the page who tended his horse, "saddle my horse well, and hasten with him to the road, and bring also my spurs with thee." And the youth did thus. And they went and sat upon the mound; and ere they had been there but a short time, they beheld the lady coming by the same road, and in the same manner, and at the same pace. "Young man," said Pwyll, "I see the lady coming; give me my horse." And no sooner had he mounted his horse than she passed him. And he turned after her and followed her. And he let his horse go bounding playfully, and thought that at the second step or the third he should come up with her. But he came no nearer to her than at first. Then he urged his horse to his utmost speed, yet he found that it availed nothing to follow her. Then said Pwyll, "O maiden, for the sake of him whom thou best lovest, stay for me." "I will stay gladly," said she, "and it were better for thy horse hadst thou asked it long since." So the maiden stopped, and she threw back that part of her headdress which covered her face. And she fixed her eyes upon him, and began to talk with him. "Lady," asked he, "whence comest thou, and whereunto dost thou journey?" "I journey on mine own errand," said she, "and right glad am I to see thee." "My greeting be unto thee," said he. Then he thought that the beauty of all the maidens, and all the ladies that he had ever seen, was as nothing compared to her beauty. "Lady," he said, "wilt thou tell me aught concerning thy purpose?" "I will tell thee," said she. "My chief quest was to seek thee." "Behold," said Pwyll, "this is to me the most pleasing quest on which thou couldst have come; and wilt thou tell me who thou art?" "I will tell thee, Lord," said she. "I am Rhiannon, the daughter of Heveydd Hên, and they sought to give me to a husband against my will. But

no husband would I have, and that because of my love for thee, neither will I yet have one unless thou reject me. And hither have I come to hear thy answer.” “By Heaven,” said Pwyll, “behold this is my answer. If I might choose among all the ladies and damsels in the world, thee would I choose.” “Verily,” said she, “if thou art thus minded, make a pledge to meet me ere I am given to another.” “The sooner I may do so, the more pleasing will it be unto me,” said Pwyll, “and wheresoever thou wilt, there will I meet with thee.” “I will that thou meet me this day twelvemonth at the palace of Heveydd. And I will cause a feast to be prepared, so that it be ready against thou come.” “Gladly,” said he, “will I keep this tryst.” “Lord,” said she, “remain in health, and be mindful that thou keep thy promise; and now I will go hence.” So they parted, and he went back to his hosts and to them of his household. And whatsoever questions they asked him respecting the damsel, he always turned the discourse upon other matters. And when a year from that time was gone, he caused a hundred knights to equip themselves and to go with him to the palace of Heveydd Hên. And he came to the palace, and there was great joy concerning him, with much concourse of people and great rejoicing, and vast preparations for his coming. And the whole Court was placed under his orders.

And the hall was garnished and they went to meat, and thus did they sit; Heveydd Hên was on one side of Pwyll, and Rhiannon on the other. And all the rest according to their rank. And they ate and feasted and talked one with another, and at the beginning of the carousal after the meat, there entered a tall auburn-haired youth, of royal bearing, clothed in a garment of satin. And when he came into the hall, he saluted Pwyll and his companions. “The greeting of Heaven be unto thee, my soul,” said Pwyll, “come thou and sit down.” “Nay,” said he, “a suitor am I, and I will do mine errand.” “Do so willingly,” said Pwyll. “Lord,” said he, “my errand is unto thee, and it is to crave a boon of thee that I come.” “What boon soever thou mayest ask of me, as far as I am able, thou shalt have.” “Ah,” said Rhiannon, “wherefore didst thou give that answer?” “Has he not given it before the presence of these nobles?” asked the youth. “My soul,” said Pwyll, “what is the boon thou askest?” “The lady whom best I love is to be

thy bride this night; I come to ask her of thee, with the feast and the banquet that are in this place.” And Pwyll was silent because of the answer which he had given. “Be silent as long as thou wilt,” said Rhiannon. “Never did man make worse use of his wits than thou hast done.” “Lady,” said he, “I knew not who he was.” “Behold this is the man to whom they would have given me against my will,” said she. “And he is Gwawl the son of Clud, a man of great power and wealth, and because of the word thou hast spoken, bestow me upon him lest shame befall thee.” “Lady,” said he, “I understand not thine answer. Never can I do as thou sayest.” “Bestow me upon him,” said she, “and I will cause that I shall never be his.” “By what means will that be?” asked Pwyll. “In thy hand will I give thee a small bag,” said she. “See that thou keep it well, and he will ask of thee the banquet, and the feast, and the preparations which are not in thy power. Unto the hosts and the household will I give the feast. And such will be thy answer respecting this. And as concerns myself, I will engage to become his bride this night twelvemonth. And at the end of the year be thou here,” said she, “and bring this bag with thee, and let thy hundred knights be in the orchard up yonder. And when he is in the midst of joy and feasting, come thou in by thyself, clad in ragged garments, and holding thy bag in thy hand, and ask nothing but a bagful of food, and I will cause that if all the meat and liquor that are in these seven Cantrevs were put into it, it would be no fuller than before. And after a great deal has been put therein, he will ask thee whether thy bag will ever be full. Say thou then that it never will, until a man of noble birth and of great wealth arise and press the food in the bag with both his feet, saying, ‘Enough has been put therein;’ and I will cause him to go and tread down the food in the bag, and when he does so, turn thou the bag, so that he shall be up over his head in it, and then slip a knot upon the thongs of the bag. Let there be also a good bugle horn about thy neck, and as soon as thou hast bound him in the bag, wind thy horn, and let it be a signal between thee and thy knights. And when they hear the sound of the horn, let them come down upon the palace.” “Lord,” said Gwawl, “it is meet that I have an answer to my request.” “As much of that thou hast asked as it is in my power to give, thou shalt have,” replied Pwyll. “My soul,” said Rhiannon

unto him, “as for the feast and the banquet that are here, I have bestowed them upon the men of Dyved, and the household, and the warriors that are with us. These can I not suffer to be given to any. In a year from to-night a banquet shall be prepared for thee in this palace, that I may become thy bride.”

So Gwawl went forth to his possessions, and Pwyll went also back to Dyved. And they both spent that year until it was the time for the feast at the palace of Heveydd Hên. Then Gwawl the son of Clud set out to the feast that was prepared for him, and he came to the palace, and was received there with rejoicing. Pwyll, also, the Chief of Annwryn, came to the orchard with his hundred knights, as Rhiannon had commanded him, having the bag with him. And Pwyll was clad in coarse and ragged garments, and wore large clumsy old shoes upon his feet. And when he knew that the carousal after the meat had begun, he went towards the hall, and when he came into the hall, he saluted Gwawl the son of Clud, and his company, both men and women. “Heaven prosper thee,” said Gwawl, “and the greeting of Heaven be unto thee.” “Lord,” said he, “may Heaven reward thee, I have an errand unto thee.” “Welcome be thine errand, and if thou ask of me that which is just, thou shalt have it gladly.” “It is fitting,” answered he. “I crave but from want, and the boon that I ask is to have this small bag that thou seest filled with meat.” “A request within reason is this,” said he, “and gladly shalt thou have it. Bring him food.” A great number of attendants arose and began to fill the bag, but for all that they put into it, it was no fuller than at first. “My soul,” said Gwawl, “will thy bag be ever full?” “It will not, I declare to Heaven,” said he, “for all that may be put into it, unless one possessed of lands, and domains, and treasure, shall arise and tread down with both his feet the food that is within the bag, and shall say, ‘Enough has been put therein.’” Then said Rhiannon unto Gwawl the son of Clud, “Rise up quickly.” “I will willingly arise,” said he. So he rose up, and put his two feet into the bag. And Pwyll turned up the sides of the bag, so that Gwawl was over his head in it. And he shut it up quickly and slipped a knot upon the thongs, and blew his horn. And thereupon behold his household came down upon the palace. And they seized all the host that

had come with Gwawl, and cast them into his own prison. And Pwyll threw off his rags, and his old shoes, and his tattered array; and as they came in, every one of Pwyll's knights struck a blow upon the bag, and asked, "What is here?" "A Badger," said they. And in this manner they played, each of them striking the bag, either with his foot or with a staff. And thus played they with the bag. Every one as he came in asked, "What game are you playing at thus?" "The game of Badger in the Bag," said they. And then was the game of Badger in the Bag first played.

"Lord," said the man in the bag, "if thou wouldest but hear me, I merit not to be slain in a bag." Said Heveydd Hên, "Lord, he speaks truth. It were fitting that thou listen to him, for he deserves not this." "Verily," said Pwyll, "I will do thy counsel concerning him." "Behold this is my counsel then," said Rhiannon; "thou art now in a position in which it behoves thee to satisfy suitors and minstrels; let him give unto them in thy stead, and take a pledge from him that he will never seek to revenge that which has been done to him. And this will be punishment enough." "I will do this gladly," said the man in the bag. "And gladly will I accept it," said Pwyll, "since it is the counsel of Heveydd and Rhiannon." "Such then is our counsel," answered they. "I accept it," said Pwyll. "Seek thyself sureties." "We will be for him," said Heveydd, "until his men be free to answer for him." And upon this he was let out of the bag, and his liegemen were liberated. "Demand now of Gwawl his sureties," said Heveydd, "we know which should be taken for him." And Heveydd numbered the sureties. Said Gwawl, "Do thou thyself draw up the covenant." "It will suffice me that it be as Rhiannon said," answered Pwyll. So unto that covenant were the sureties pledged. "Verily, Lord," said Gwawl, "I am greatly hurt, and I have many bruises. I have need to be anointed; with thy leave I will go forth. I will leave nobles in my stead, to answer for me in all that thou shalt require." "Willingly," said Pwyll, "mayest thou do thus." So Gwawl went towards his own possessions.

And the hall was set in order for Pwyll and the men of his host, and for them also of the palace, and they went to the tables and sat down. And as they had sat that time twelvemonth, so sat they that night. And they ate, and

feasted, and spent the night in mirth and tranquillity. And the time came that they should sleep, and Pwyll and Rhiannon went to their chamber.

And next morning at the break of day, "My Lord," said Rhiannon, "arise and begin to give thy gifts unto the minstrels. Refuse no one to-day that may claim thy bounty." "Thus shall it be gladly," said Pwyll, "both to-day and every day while the feast shall last." So Pwyll arose, and he caused silence to be proclaimed, and desired all the suitors and the minstrels to show and to point out what gifts were to their wish and desire. And this being done, the feast went on, and he denied no one while it lasted. And when the feast was ended, Pwyll said unto Heveydd, "My Lord, with thy permission I will set out for Dyved to-morrow." "Certainly," said Heveydd, "may Heaven prosper thee. Fix also a time when Rhiannon may follow thee." "By Heaven," said Pwyll, "we will go hence together." "Willest thou this, Lord?" said Heveydd. "Yes, by Heaven," answered Pwyll.

And the next day, they set forward towards Dyved, and journeyed to the palace of Narberth, where a feast was made ready for them. And there came to them great numbers of the chief men and the most noble ladies of the land, and of these there was none to whom Rhiannon did not give some rich gift, either a bracelet, or a ring, or a precious stone. And they ruled the land prosperously both that year and the next.

And in the third year the nobles of the land began to be sorrowful at seeing a man whom they loved so much, and who was moreover their lord and their foster-brother, without an heir. And they came to him. And the place where they met was Preseleu, in Dyved. "Lord," said they, "we know that thou art not so young as some of the men of this country, and we fear that thou mayest not have an heir of the wife whom thou hast taken. Take therefore another wife of whom thou mayest have heirs. Thou canst not always continue with us, and though thou desire to remain as thou art, we will not suffer thee." "Truly," said Pwyll, "we have not long been joined together, and many things may yet befall. Grant me a year from this time, and for the space of a year we will abide together, and after that I will do according to your wishes." So they granted it. And before the end of a year a son was born unto him. And in Narberth was he born; and on the night



that he was born, women were brought to watch the mother and the boy. And the women slept, as did also Rhiannon, the mother of the boy. And the number of the women that were brought into the chamber was six. And they watched for a good portion of the night, and before midnight every one of them fell asleep, and towards break of day they awoke; and when they awoke, they looked where they had put the boy, and behold he was not there. "Oh," said one of the women, "the boy is lost?" "Yes," said another, "and it will be small vengeance if we are burnt or put to death because of the child." Said one of the women, "Is there any counsel for us in the world in this matter?" "There is," answered another, "I offer you good counsel." "What is that?" asked they. "There is here a stag-hound bitch, and she has a litter of whelps. Let us kill some of the cubs, and rub the blood on the face and hands of Rhiannon, and lay the bones before her, and assert that she herself hath devoured her son, and she alone will not be able to gainsay us six." And according to this counsel it was settled. And towards morning Rhiannon awoke, and she said, "Women, where is my son?" "Lady," said they, "ask us not concerning thy son, we have nought but the blows and the bruises we got by struggling with thee, and of a truth we never saw any woman so violent as thou, for it was of no avail to contend with thee. Hast thou not thyself devoured thy son? Claim him not therefore of us." "For pity's sake," said Rhiannon; "the Lord God knows all things. Charge me not falsely. If you tell me this from fear, I assert before Heaven that I will defend you." "Truly," said they, "we would not bring evil on ourselves for any one in the world." "For pity's sake," said Rhiannon, "you will receive no evil by telling the truth." But for all her words, whether fair or harsh, she received but the same answer from the women.

And Pwyll the chief of Annwryn arose, and his household, and his hosts. And this occurrence could not be concealed, but the story went forth throughout the land, and all the nobles heard it. Then the nobles came to Pwyll, and besought him to put away his wife, because of the great crime which she had done. But Pwyll answered them, that they had no cause wherefore they might ask him to put away his wife, save for her having no

children. "But children has she now had, therefore will I not put her away; if she has done wrong, let her do penance for it."

So Rhiannon sent for the teachers and the wise men, and as she preferred doing penance to contending with the women, she took upon her a penance. And the penance that was imposed upon her was, that she should remain in that palace of Narberth until the end of seven years, and that she should sit every day near unto a horseblock that was without the gate. And that she should relate the story to all who should come there, whom she might suppose not to know it already; and that she should offer the guests and strangers, if they would permit her, to carry them upon her back into the palace. But it rarely happened that any would permit. And thus did she spend part of the year.

Now at that time Teirnyon Twryv Vliant was Lord of Gwent Is Coed, and he was the best man in the world. And unto his house there belonged a mare, than which neither mare nor horse in the kingdom was more beautiful. And on the night of every first of May she foaled, and no one ever knew what became of the colt. And one night Teirnyon talked with his wife: "Wife," said he, "it is very simple of us that our mare should foal every year, and that we should have none of her colts." "What can be done in the matter?" said she. "This is the night of the first of May," said he. "The vengeance of Heaven be upon me, if I learn not what it is that takes away the colts." So he caused the mare to be brought into a house, and he armed himself, and began to watch that night. And in the beginning of the night, the mare foaled a large and beautiful colt. And it was standing up in the place. And Teirnyon rose up and looked at the size of the colt, and as he did so he heard a great tumult, and after the tumult behold a claw came through the window into the house, and it seized the colt by the mane. Then Teirnyon drew his sword, and struck off the arm at the elbow, so that portion of the arm together with the colt was in the house with him. And then did he hear a tumult and wailing, both at once. And he opened the door, and rushed out in the direction of the noise, and he could not see the cause of the tumult because of the darkness of the night, but he rushed after it and followed it. Then he remembered that he had left the door open, and

he returned. And at the door behold there was an infant boy in swaddling-clothes, wrapped around in a mantle of satin. And he took up the boy, and behold he was very strong for the age that he was of.

Then he shut the door, and went into the chamber where his wife was. "Lady," said he, "art thou sleeping?" "No, lord," said she, "I was asleep, but as thou camest in I did awake." "Behold, here is a boy for thee if thou wilt," said he, "since thou hast never had one." "My lord," said she, "what adventure is this?" "It was thus," said Teirnyon; and he told her how it all befell. "Verily, lord," said she, "what sort of garments are there upon the boy?" "A mantle of satin," said he. "He is then a boy of gentle lineage," she replied. "My lord," she said, "if thou wilt, I shall have great diversion and mirth. I will call my women unto me, and tell them that I have been pregnant." "I will readily grant thee to do this," he answered. And thus did they, and they caused the boy to be baptized, and the ceremony was performed there; and the name which they gave unto him was Gwri Wallt Euryn, because what hair was upon his head was as yellow as gold. And they had the boy nursed in the Court until he was a year old. And before the year was over he could walk stoutly. And he was larger than a boy of three years old, even one of great growth and size. And the boy was nursed the second year, and then he was as large as a child six years old. And before the end of the fourth year, he would bribe the grooms to allow him to take the horses to water. "My lord," said his wife unto Teirnyon, "where is the colt which thou didst save on the night that thou didst find the boy?" "I have commanded the grooms of the horses," said he, "that they take care of him." "Would it not be well, lord," said she, "if thou wert to cause him to be broken in, and given to the boy, seeing that on the same night that thou didst find the boy, the colt was foaled and thou didst save him?" "I will not oppose thee in this matter," said Teirnyon. "I will allow thee to give him the colt." "Lord," said she, "may Heaven reward thee; I will give it him." So the horse was given to the boy. Then she went to the grooms and those who tended the horses, and commanded them to be careful of the horse, so that he might be broken in by the time that the boy could ride him.

And while these things were going forward, they heard tidings of Rhiannon and her punishment. And Teirnyon Twryv Vliant, by reason of the pity that he felt on hearing this story of Rhiannon and her punishment, inquired closely concerning it, until he had heard from many of those who came to his court. Then did Teirnyon, often lamenting the sad history, ponder within himself, and he looked steadfastly on the boy, and as he looked upon him, it seemed to him that he had never beheld so great a likeness between father and son, as between the boy and Pwyll the Chief of Annwvyn. Now the semblance of Pwyll was well known to him, for he had of yore been one of his followers. And thereupon he became grieved for the wrong that he did, in keeping with him a boy whom he knew to be the son of another man. And the first time that he was alone with his wife, he told her that it was not right that they should keep the boy with them, and suffer so excellent a lady as Rhiannon to be punished so greatly on his account, whereas the boy was the son of Pwyll the Chief of Annwvyn. And Teirnyon's wife agreed with him, that they should send the boy to Pwyll. "And three things, lord," said she, "shall we gain thereby. Thanks and gifts for releasing Rhiannon from her punishment; and thanks from Pwyll for nursing his son and restoring him unto him; and thirdly, if the boy is of gentle nature, he will be our foster-son, and he will do for us all the good in his power." So it was settled according to this counsel.

And no later than the next day was Teirnyon equipped, and two other knights with him. And the boy, as a fourth in their company, went with them upon the horse which Teirnyon had given him. And they journeyed towards Narberth, and it was not long before they reached that place. And as they drew near to the palace, they beheld Rhiannon sitting beside the horseblock. And when they were opposite to her, "Chieftain," said she, "go not further thus, I will bear every one of you into the palace, and this is my penance for slaying my own son and devouring him." "Oh, fair lady," said Teirnyon, "think not that I will be one to be carried upon thy back." "Neither will I," said the boy. "Truly, my soul," said Teirnyon, "we will not go." So they went forward to the palace, and there was great joy at their coming. And at the palace a feast was prepared, because Pwyll was come

back from the confines of Dyved. And they went into the hall and washed, and Pwyll rejoiced to see Teirnyon. And in this order they sat. Teirnyon between Pwyll and Rhiannon, and Teirnyon's two companions on the other side of Pwyll, with the boy between them. And after meat they began to carouse and to discourse. And Teirnyon's discourse was concerning the adventure of the mare and the boy, and how he and his wife had nursed and reared the child as their own. "And behold here is thy son, lady," said Teirnyon. "And whosoever told that lie concerning thee, has done wrong. And when I heard of thy sorrow, I was troubled and grieved. And I believe that there is none of this host who will not perceive that the boy is the son of Pwyll," said Teirnyon. "There is none," said they all, "who is not certain thereof." "I declare to Heaven," said Rhiannon, "that if this be true, there is indeed an end to my trouble." "Lady," said Pendaran Dyved, "well hast thou named thy son Pryderi,<sup>4</sup> and well becomes him the name of Pryderi son of Pwyll Chief of Annwvyn." "Look you," said Rhiannon, "will not his own name become him better?" "What name has he?" asked Pendaran Dyved. "Gwri Wallt Euryn is the name that we gave him." "Pryderi," said Pendaran, "shall his name be." "It were more proper," said Pwyll, "that the boy should take his name from the word his mother spoke when she received the joyful tidings of him." And thus was it arranged.

"Teirnyon," said Pwyll, "Heaven reward thee that thou hast reared the boy up to this time, and, being of gentle lineage, it were fitting that he repay thee for it." "My lord," said Teirnyon, "it was my wife who nursed him, and there is no one in the world so afflicted as she at parting with him. It were well that he should bear in mind what I and my wife have done for him." "I call Heaven to witness," said Pwyll, "that while I live I will support thee and thy possessions, as long as I am able to preserve my own. And when he shall have power, he will more fitly maintain them than I. And if this counsel be pleasing unto thee, and to my nobles, it shall be that, as thou hast reared him up to the present time, I will give him to be brought up by Pendaran Dyved, from henceforth. And you shall be companions, and shall both be foster-fathers unto him." "This is good counsel," said they all. So the boy was given to Pendaran Dyved, and the nobles of the land were sent

with him. And Teirnyon Twryv Vliant, and his companions, set out for his country, and his possessions, with love and gladness. And he went not without being offered the fairest jewels and the fairest horses, and the choicest dogs; but he would take none of them.

Thereupon they all remained in their own dominions. And Pryderi, the son of Pwyll the Chief of Annwvyn, was brought up carefully as was fit, so that he became the fairest youth, and the most comely, and the best skilled in all good games, of any in the kingdom. And thus passed years and years, until the end of Pwyll the Chief of Annwvyn's life came, and he died.

And Pryderi ruled the seven Cantreys of Dyved prosperously, and he was beloved by his people, and by all around him. And at length he added unto them the three Cantreys of Ystrad Tywi, and the four Cantreys of Cardigan; and these were called the Seven Cantreys of Seissyllwch. And when he made this addition, Pryderi the son of Pwyll the Chief of Annwvyn desired to take a wife. And the wife he chose was Kicva, the daughter of Gwynn Gohoyw, the son of Gloyw Wallt Lydan, the son of Prince Casnar, one of the nobles of this Island.

And thus ends this portion of the Mabinogion.

## **Branwen the Daughter of Llyr**

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## **Here is the Second Portion of the Mabinogi**

Bendigeid Vran, the son of Llyr, was the crowned king of this island, and he was exalted from the crown of London. And one afternoon he was at Harlech in Ardudwy, at his Court, and he sat upon the rock of Harlech, looking over the sea. And with him were his brother Manawyddan the son of Llyr, and his brothers by the mother's side, Nissyen and Evnissyen, and many nobles likewise, as was fitting to see around a king. His two brothers by the mother's side were the sons of Eurosswydd, by his mother, Penardun, the daughter of Beli son of Manogan. And one of these youths was a good youth and of gentle nature, and would make peace between his kindred, and cause his family to be friends when their wrath was at the highest; and this one was Nissyen; but the other would cause strife between his two brothers when they were most at peace. And as they sat thus, they beheld thirteen ships coming from the south of Ireland, and making towards them, and they came with a swift motion, the wind being behind them, and they neared them rapidly. "I see ships afar," said the king, "coming swiftly towards the land. Command the men of the Court that they equip themselves, and go and learn their intent." So the men equipped themselves and went down towards them. And when they saw the ships near, certain were they that they had never seen ships better furnished. Beautiful flags of satin were upon them. And behold one of the ships outstripped the others, and they saw a shield lifted up above the side of the ship, and the point of the shield was upwards, in token of peace. And the men drew near that they might hold converse. Then they put out boats and came towards the land. And they saluted the king. Now the king could hear them from the place where he was, upon the rock above their heads. "Heaven prosper you," said he, "and be ye welcome. To whom do these ships belong, and who is the chief amongst you?" "Lord," said they, "Matholwch, king of Ireland, is here, and these ships belong to him." "Wherefore comes he?" asked the king, "and will he come to the land?" "He is a suitor unto thee, lord," said

they, "and he will not land unless he have his boon." "And what may that be?" inquired the king. "He desires to ally himself with thee, lord," said they, "and he comes to ask Branwen the daughter of Llyr, that, if it seem well to thee, the Island of the Mighty may be leagued with Ireland, and both become more powerful." "Verily," said he, "let him come to land, and we will take counsel thereupon." And this answer was brought to Matholwch. "I will go willingly," said he. So he landed, and they received him joyfully; and great was the throng in the palace that night, between his hosts and those of the Court; and next day they took counsel, and they resolved to bestow Branwen upon Matholwch. Now she was one of the three chief ladies of this island, and she was the fairest damsel in the world.

And they fixed upon Aberffraw as the place where she should become his bride. And they went thence, and towards Aberffraw the hosts proceeded; Matholwch and his host in their ships; Bendigeid Vran and his host by land, until they came to Aberffraw. And at Aberffraw they began the feast and sat down. And thus sat they. The King of the Island of the Mighty and Manawyddan the son of Llyr on one side, and Matholwch on the other side, and Branwen the daughter of Llyr beside him. And they were not within a house, but under tents. No house could ever contain Bendigeid Vran. And they began the banquet and caroused and discoursed. And when it was more pleasing to them to sleep than to carouse, they went to rest, and that night Branwen became Matholwch's bride.

And next day they arose, and all they of the Court, and the officers began to equip and to range the horses and the attendants, and they ranged them in order as far as the sea.

And behold one day, Evnissyen, the quarrelsome man of whom it is spoken above, came by chance into the place, where the horses of Matholwch were, and asked whose horses they might be. "They are the horses of Matholwch king of Ireland, who is married to Branwen, thy sister; his horses are they." "And is it thus they have done with a maiden such as she, and moreover my sister, bestowing her without my consent? They could have offered no greater insult to me than this," said he. And thereupon he rushed under the horses and cut off their lips at the teeth, and



their ears close to their heads, and their tails close to their backs, and wherever he could clutch their eyelids, he cut them to the very bone, and he disfigured the horses and rendered them useless.

And they came with these tidings unto Matholwch, saying that the horses were disfigured, and injured so that not one of them could ever be of any use again. "Verily, lord," said one, "it was an insult unto thee, and as such was it meant." "Of a truth, it is a marvel to me, that if they desire to insult me, they should have given me a maiden of such high rank and so much beloved of her kindred, as they have done." "Lord," said another, "thou seest that thus it is, and there is nothing for thee to do but to go to thy ships." And thereupon towards his ships he set out.

And tidings came to Bendigeid Vran that Matholwch was quitting the Court without asking leave, and messengers were sent to inquire of him wherefore he did so. And the messengers that went were Iddic the son of Anarawd, and Heveydd Hir. And these overtook him and asked of him what he designed to do, and wherefore he went forth. "Of a truth," said he, "if I had known I had not come hither. I have been altogether insulted, no one had ever worse treatment than I have had here. But one thing surprises me above all." "What is that?" asked they. "That Branwen the daughter of Llyr, one of the three chief ladies of this island, and the daughter of the King of the Island of the Mighty, should have been given me as my bride, and that after that I should have been insulted; and I marvel that the insult was not done me before they had bestowed upon me a maiden so exalted as she." "Truly, lord, it was not the will of any that are of the Court," said they, "nor of any that are of the council, that thou shouldest have received this insult; and as thou hast been insulted, the dishonour is greater unto Bendigeid Vran than unto thee." "Verily," said he, "I think so. Nevertheless he cannot recall the insult." These men returned with that answer to the place where Bendigeid Vran was, and they told him what reply Matholwch had given them. "Truly," said he, "there are no means by which we may prevent his going away at enmity with us, that we will not take." "Well, lord," said they, "send after him another embassy." "I will do so," said he. "Arise, Manawyddan son of Llyr, and Heveydd Hir, and Unic Glew Ysgwyd, and

go after him, and tell him that he shall have a sound horse for every one that has been injured. And beside that, as an atonement for the insult, he shall have a staff of silver, as large and as tall as himself, and a plate of gold of the breadth of his face. And show unto him who it was that did this, and that it was done against my will; but that he who did it is my brother, by the mother's side, and therefore it would be hard for me to put him to death. And let him come and meet me," said he, "and we will make peace in any way he may desire."

The embassy went after Matholwch, and told him all these sayings in a friendly manner, and he listened thereunto. "Men," said he, "I will take counsel." So to the council he went. And in the council they considered that if they should refuse this, they were likely to have more shame rather than to obtain so great an atonement. They resolved therefore to accept it, and they returned to the Court in peace.

Then the pavilions and the tents were set in order after the fashion of a hall; and they went to meat, and as they had sat at the beginning of the feast, so sat they there. And Matholwch and Bendigeid Vran began to discourse; and behold it seemed to Bendigeid Vran, while they talked, that Matholwch was not so cheerful as he had been before. And he thought that the chieftain might be sad, because of the smallness of the atonement which he had, for the wrong that had been done him. "Oh, man," said Bendigeid Vran, "thou dost not discourse to-night so cheerfully as thou wast wont. And if it be because of the smallness of the atonement, thou shalt add thereunto whatsoever thou mayest choose, and to-morrow I will pay thee the horses." "Lord," said he, "Heaven reward thee." "And I will enhance the atonement," said Bendigeid Vran, "for I will give unto thee a cauldron, the property of which is, that if one of thy men be slain to-day, and be cast therein, to-morrow he will be as well as ever he was at the best, except that he will not regain his speech." And thereupon he gave him great thanks, and very joyful was he for that cause.

And the next morning they paid Matholwch the horses as long as the trained horses lasted. And then they journeyed into another commot, where

they paid him with colts until the whole had been paid, and from thenceforth that commot was called Talebolion.

And a second night sat they together. "My lord," said Matholwch, "whence hadst thou the cauldron which thou hast given me?" "I had it of a man who had been in thy land," said he, "and I would not give it except to one from there." "Who was it?" asked he. "Llassar Llaesgyvnewid; he came here from Ireland with Kymideu Kymeinvoll, his wife, who escaped from the Iron House in Ireland, when it was made red hot around them, and fled hither. And it is a marvel to me that thou shouldst know nothing concerning the matter." "Something I do know," said he, "and as much as I know I will tell thee. One day I was hunting in Ireland, and I came to the mound at the head of the lake, which is called the Lake of the Cauldron. And I beheld a huge yellow-haired man coming from the lake with a cauldron upon his back. And he was a man of vast size, and of horrid aspect, and a woman followed after him. And if the man was tall, twice as large as he was the woman, and they came towards me and greeted me. 'Verily,' asked I, 'wherefore are you journeying?' 'Behold, this,' said he to me, 'is the cause that we journey. At the end of a month and a fortnight this woman will have a son; and the child that will be born at the end of the month and the fortnight will be a warrior fully armed.' So I took them with me and maintained them. And they were with me for a year. And that year I had them with me not grudgingly. But thenceforth was there murmuring, because that they were with me. For, from the beginning of the fourth month they had begun to make themselves hated and to be disorderly in the land; committing outrages, and molesting and harassing the nobles and ladies; and thenceforward my people rose up and besought me to part with them, and they bade me to choose between them and my dominions. And I applied to the council of my country to know what should be done concerning them; for of their own free will they would not go, neither could they be compelled against their will, through fighting. And the people of the country being in this strait, they caused a chamber to be made all of iron. Now when the chamber was ready, there came there every smith that was in Ireland, and every one who owned tongs and hammer. And they caused

coals to be piled up as high as the top of the chamber. And they had the man, and the woman, and the children, served with plenty of meat and drink; but when it was known that they were drunk, they began to put fire to the coals about the chamber, and they blew it with bellows until the house was red hot all around them. Then was there a council held in the centre of the floor of the chamber. And the man tarried until the plates of iron were all of a white heat; and then, by reason of the great heat, the man dashed against the plates with his shoulder and struck them out, and his wife followed him; but except him and his wife none escaped thence. And then I suppose, lord,” said Matholwch unto Bendigeid Vran, “that he came over unto thee.” “Doubtless he came here,” said he, “and gave unto me the cauldron.” “In what manner didst thou receive them?” “I dispersed them through every part of my dominions, and they have become numerous and are prospering everywhere, and they fortify the places where they are with men and arms, of the best that were ever seen.”

That night they continued to discourse as much as they would, and had minstrelsy and carousing, and when it was more pleasant to them to sleep than to sit longer, they went to rest. And thus was the banquet carried on with joyousness; and when it was finished, Matholwch journeyed towards Ireland, and Branwen with him, and they went from Aber Menei with thirteen ships, and came to Ireland. And in Ireland was there great joy because of their coming. And not one great man or noble lady visited Branwen unto whom she gave not either a clasp, or a ring, or a royal jewel to keep, such as it was honourable to be seen departing with. And in these things she spent that year in much renown, and she passed her time pleasantly, enjoying honour and friendship. And in the meanwhile it chanced that she became pregnant, and in due time a son was born unto her, and the name that they gave him was Gwern the son of Matholwch, and they put the boy out to be foster-nursed, in a place where were the best men of Ireland.

And behold in the second year a tumult arose in Ireland, on account of the insult which Matholwch had received in Cambria, and the payment made him for his horses. And his foster-brothers, and such as were nearest

unto him, blamed him openly for that matter. And he might have no peace by reason of the tumult until they should revenge upon him this disgrace. And the vengeance which they took was to drive away Branwen from the same chamber with him, and to make her cook for the Court; and they caused the butcher after he had cut up the meat to come to her and give her every day a blow on the ear, and such they made her punishment.

“Verily, lord,” said his men to Matholwch, “forbid now the ships and the ferry boats and the coracles, that they go not into Cambria, and such as come over from Cambria hither, imprison them that they go not back for this thing to be known there.” And he did so; and it was thus for not less than three years.

And Branwen reared a starling in the cover of the kneading trough, and she taught it to speak, and she taught the bird what manner of man her brother was. And she wrote a letter of her woes, and the despite with which she was treated, and she bound the letter to the root of the bird’s wing, and sent it towards Britain. And the bird came to this island, and one day it found Bendigeid Vran at Caer Seiont in Arvon, conferring there, and it alighted upon his shoulder and ruffled its feathers, so that the letter was seen, and they knew that the bird had been reared in a domestic manner.

Then Bendigeid Vran took the letter and looked upon it. And when he had read the letter he grieved exceedingly at the tidings of Branwen’s woes. And immediately he began sending messengers to summon the island together. And he caused sevenscore and four countries to come unto him, and he complained to them himself of the grief that his sister endured. So they took counsel. And in the council they resolved to go to Ireland, and to leave seven men as princes here, and Caradawc, the son of Bran, as the chief of them, and their seven knights. In Edeyrnion were these men left. And for this reason were the seven knights placed in the town. Now the names of these seven men were, Caradawc the son of Bran, and Heveydd Hir, and Unic Glew Ysgwyd, and Iddic the son of Anarawc Gwalltgrwn, and Fodor the son of Eryyll, and Gwlch Minascwrn, and Llassar the son of Llaesar Llaesgygyd, and Pendaran Dyved as a young page with them.

And these abode as seven ministers to take charge of this island; and Caradawc the son of Bran was the chief amongst them.

Bendigeid Vran, with the host of which we spoke, sailed towards Ireland, and it was not far across the sea, and he came to shoal water. It was caused by two rivers; the Lli and the Archan were they called; and the nations covered the sea. Then he proceeded with what provisions he had on his own back, and approached the shore of Ireland.

Now the swineherds of Matholwch were upon the seashore, and they came to Matholwch. "Lord," said they, "greeting be unto thee." "Heaven protect you," said he, "have you any news?" "Lord," said they, "we have marvellous news, a wood have we seen upon the sea, in a place where we never yet saw a single tree." "This is indeed a marvel," said he; "saw you aught else?" "We saw, lord," said they, "a vast mountain beside the wood, which moved, and there was a lofty ridge on the top of the mountain, and a lake on each side of the ridge. And the wood, and the mountain, and all these things moved." "Verily," said he, "there is none who can know aught concerning this, unless it be Branwen."

Messengers then went unto Branwen. "Lady," said they, "what thinkest thou that this is?" "The men of the Island of the Mighty, who have come hither on hearing of my ill-treatment and my woes." "What is the forest that is seen upon the sea?" asked they. "The yards and the masts of ships," she answered. "Alas," said they, "what is the mountain that is seen by the side of the ships?" "Bendigeid Vran, my brother," she replied, "coming to shoal water; there is no ship that can contain him in it." "What is the lofty ridge with the lake on each side thereof?" "On looking towards this island he is wroth, and his two eyes, one on each side of his nose, are the two lakes beside the ridge."

The warriors and the chief men of Ireland were brought together in haste, and they took counsel. "Lord," said the nobles unto Matholwch, "there is no other counsel than to retreat over the Linon (a river which is in Ireland), and to keep the river between thee and him, and to break down the bridge that is across the river, for there is a loadstone at the bottom of the

river that neither ship nor vessel can pass over.” So they retreated across the river, and broke down the bridge.

Bendigeid Vran came to land, and the fleet with him by the bank of the river. “Lord,” said his chieftains, “knowest thou the nature of this river, that nothing can go across it, and there is no bridge over it?” “What,” said they, “is thy counsel concerning a bridge?” “There is none,” said he, “except that he who will be chief, let him be a bridge. I will be so,” said he. And then was that saying first uttered, and it is still used as a proverb. And when he had lain down across the river, hurdles were placed upon him, and the host passed over thereby.

And as he rose up, behold the messengers of Matholwch came to him, and saluted him, and gave him greeting in the name of Matholwch, his kinsman, and showed how that of his goodwill he had merited of him nothing but good. “For Matholwch has given the kingdom of Ireland to Gwern the son of Matholwch, thy nephew and thy sister’s son. And this he places before thee, as a compensation for the wrong and despite that has been done unto Branwen. And Matholwch shall be maintained wheresoever thou wilt, either here or in the Island of the Mighty.” Said Bendigeid Vran, “Shall not I myself have the kingdom? Then peradventure I may take counsel concerning your message. From this time until then no other answer will you get from me.” “Verily,” said they, “the best message that we receive for thee, we will convey it unto thee, and do thou await our message unto him.” “I will wait,” answered he, “and do you return quickly.”

The messengers set forth and came to Matholwch. “Lord,” said they, “prepare a better message for Bendigeid Vran. He would not listen at all to the message that we bore him.” “My friends,” said Matholwch, “what may be your counsel?” “Lord,” said they, “there is no other counsel than this alone. He was never known to be within a house, make therefore a house that will contain him and the men of the Island of the Mighty on the one side, and thyself and thy host on the other; and give over thy kingdom to his will, and do him homage. So by reason of the honour thou doest him in making him a house, whereas he never before had a house to contain him,

he will make peace with thee.” So the messengers went back to Bendigeid Vran, bearing him this message.

And he took counsel, and in the council it was resolved that he should accept this, and this was all done by the advice of Branwen, and lest the country should be destroyed. And this peace was made, and the house was built both vast and strong. But the Irish planned a crafty device, and the craft was that they should put brackets on each side of the hundred pillars that were in the house, and should place a leathern bag on each bracket, and an armed man in every one of them. Then Evnissyen came in before the host of the Island of the Mighty, and scanned the house with fierce and savage looks, and descried the leathern bags which were around the pillars. “What is in this bag?” asked he of one of the Irish. “Meal, good soul,” said he. And Evnissyen felt about it until he came to the man’s head, and he squeezed the head until he felt his fingers meet together in the brain through the bone. And he left that one and put his hand upon another, and asked what was therein. “Meal,” said the Irishman. So he did the like unto every one of them, until he had not left alive, of all the two hundred men, save one only; and when he came to him, he asked what was there. “Meal, good soul,” said the Irishman. And he felt about until he felt the head, and he squeezed that head as he had done the others. And, albeit he found that the head of this one was armed, he left him not until he had killed him. And then he sang an Englyn:—

“There is in this bag a different sort of meal,  
The ready combatant, when the assault is made  
By his fellow-warriors, prepared for battle.”

Thereupon came the hosts unto the house. The men of the Island of Ireland entered the house on the one side, and the men of the Island of the Mighty on the other. And as soon as they had sat down there was concord between them; and the sovereignty was conferred upon the boy. When the peace was concluded, Bendigeid Vran called the boy unto him, and from Bendigeid Vran the boy went unto Manawyddan, and he was beloved by all



that beheld him. And from Manawyddan the boy was called by Nissyen the son of Eurosswydd, and the boy went unto him lovingly. "Wherefore," said Evnissyen, "comes not my nephew the son of my sister unto me? Though he were not king of Ireland, yet willingly would I fondle the boy." "Cheerfully let him go to thee," said Bendigeid Vran, and the boy went unto him cheerfully. "By my confession to Heaven," said Evnissyen in his heart, "unthought of by the household is the slaughter that I will this instant commit."

Then he arose and took up the boy by the feet, and before any one in the house could seize hold of him, he thrust the boy headlong into the blazing fire. And when Branwen saw her son burning in the fire, she strove to leap into the fire also, from the place where she sat between her two brothers. But Bendigeid Vran grasped her with one hand, and his shield with the other. Then they all hurried about the house, and never was there made so great a tumult by any host in one house as was made by them, as each man armed himself. Then said Morddwydtyllyon, "The gadflies of Morddwydtyllyon's Cow!" And while they all sought their arms, Bendigeid Vran supported Branwen between his shield and his shoulder.

Then the Irish kindled a fire under the cauldron of renovation, and they cast the dead bodies into the cauldron until it was full, and the next day they came forth fighting-men as good as before, except that they were not able to speak. Then when Evnissyen saw the dead bodies of the men of the Island of the Mighty nowhere resuscitated, he said in his heart, "Alas! woe is me, that I should have been the cause of bringing the men of the Island of the Mighty into so great a strait. Evil betide me if I find not a deliverance therefrom." And he cast himself among the dead bodies of the Irish, and two unshod Irishmen came to him, and, taking him to be one of the Irish, flung him into the cauldron. And he stretched himself out in the cauldron, so that he rent the cauldron into four pieces, and burst his own heart also.

In consequence of that the men of the Island of the Mighty obtained such success as they had; but they were not victorious, for only seven men of them all escaped, and Bendigeid Vran himself was wounded in the foot with a poisoned dart. Now the seven men that escaped were Pryderi,

Manawyddan, Gluneu Eil Taran, Taliesin, Ynawc, Grudyen the son of Muryel, and Heilyn the son of Gwynn Hen.

And Bendigeid Vran commanded them that they should cut off his head. “And take you my head,” said he, “and bear it even unto the White Mount, in London, and bury it there, with the face towards France. And a long time will you be upon the road. In Harlech you will be feasting seven years, the birds of Rhiannon singing unto you the while. And all that time the head will be to you as pleasant company as it ever was when on my body. And at Gwales in Penvro you will be fourscore years, and you may remain there, and the head with you uncorrupted, until you open the door that looks towards Aber Henvelen, and towards Cornwall. And after you have opened that door, there you may no longer tarry, set forth then to London to bury the head, and go straight forward.”

So they cut off his head, and these seven went forward therewith. And Branwen was the eighth with them, and they came to land at Aber Alaw, in Talebolyon, and they sat down to rest. And Branwen looked towards Ireland and towards the Island of the Mighty, to see if she could descry them. “Alas,” said she, “woe is me that I was ever born; two islands have been destroyed because of me!” Then she uttered a loud groan, and there broke her heart. And they made her a four-sided grave, and buried her upon the banks of the Alaw.

Then the seven men journeyed forward towards Harlech, bearing the head with them; and as they went, behold there met them a multitude of men and of women. “Have you any tidings?” asked Manawyddan. “We have none,” said they, “save that Caswallawn the son of Beli has conquered the Island of the Mighty, and is crowned king in London.” “What has become,” said they, “of Caradawc the son of Bran, and the seven men who were left with him in this island?” “Caswallawn came upon them, and slew six of the men, and Caradawc’s heart broke for grief thereof; for he could see the sword that slew the men, but knew not who it was that wielded it. Caswallawn had flung upon him the Veil of Illusion, so that no one could see him slay the men, but the sword only could they see. And it liked him not to slay Caradawc, because he was his nephew, the son of his cousin.

And now he was the third whose heart had broke through grief. Pendaran Dyved, who had remained as a young page with these men, escaped into the wood,” said they.

Then they went on to Harlech, and there stopped to rest, and they provided meat and liquor, and sat down to eat and to drink. And there came three birds, and began singing unto them a certain song, and all the songs they had ever heard were unpleasant compared thereto; and the birds seemed to them to be at a great distance from them over the sea, yet they appeared as distinct as if they were close by, and at this repast they continued seven years.

And at the close of the seventh year they went forth to Gwales in Penvro. And there they found a fair and regal spot overlooking the ocean; and a spacious hall was therein. And they went into the hall, and two of its doors were open, but the third door was closed, that which looked towards Cornwall. “See, yonder,” said Manawyddan, “is the door that we may not open.” And that night they regaled themselves and were joyful. And of all they had seen of food laid before them, and of all they had heard of, they remembered nothing; neither of that, nor of any sorrow whatsoever. And there they remained fourscore years, unconscious of having ever spent a time more joyous and mirthful. And they were not more weary than when first they came, neither did they, any of them, know the time they had been there. And it was not more irksome to them having the head with them, than if Bendigeid Vran had been with them himself. And because of these fourscore years, it was called “the Entertaining of the noble Head.” The entertaining of Branwen and Matholwch was in the time that they went to Ireland.

One day said Heilyn the son of Gwynn, “Evil betide me, if I do not open the door to know if that is true which is said concerning it.” So he opened the door and looked towards Cornwall and Aber Henvelen. And when they had looked, they were as conscious of all the evils they had ever sustained, and of all the friends and companions they had lost, and of all the misery that had befallen them, as if all had happened in that very spot; and especially of the fate of their lord. And because of their perturbation they

could not rest, but journeyed forth with the head towards London. And they buried the head in the White Mount, and when it was buried, this was the third goodly concealment; and it was the third ill-fated disclosure when it was disinterred, inasmuch as no invasion from across the sea came to this island while the head was in that concealment.

And thus is the story related of those who journeyed over from Ireland.

In Ireland none were left alive, except five pregnant women in a cave in the Irish wilderness; and to these five women in the same night were born five sons, whom they nursed until they became grown-up youths. And they thought about wives, and they at the same time desired to possess them, and each took a wife of the mothers of their companions, and they governed the country and peopled it.

And these five divided it amongst them, and because of this partition are the five divisions of Ireland still so termed. And they examined the land where the battles had taken place, and they found gold and silver until they became wealthy.

And thus ends this portion of the Mabinogi, concerning the blow given to Branwen, which was the third unhappy blow of this island; and concerning the entertainment of Bran, when the hosts of sevenscore countries and ten went over to Ireland to revenge the blow given to Branwen; and concerning the seven years' banquet in Harlech, and the singing of the birds of Rhiannon, and the sojourning of the head for the space of fourscore years.

## **Manawyddan the Son of Llyr**

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### **Here is the Third Portion of the Mabinogi**

When the seven men of whom we spoke above had buried the head of Bendigeid Vran, in the White Mount an London, with its face towards France; Manawyddan gazed upon the town of London, and upon his

companions, and heaved a great sigh; and much grief and heaviness came upon him. "Alas, Almighty Heaven, woe is me," he exclaimed, "there is none save myself without a resting-place this night." "Lord," said Pryderi, "be not so sorrowful. Thy cousin is king of the Island of the Mighty, and though he should do thee wrong, thou hast never been a claimant of land or possessions. Thou art the third disinherited prince." "Yea," answered he, "but although this man is my cousin, it grieveth me to see any one in the place of my brother Bendigeid Vran, neither can I be happy in the same dwelling with him." "Wilt thou follow the counsel of another?" said Pryderi. "I stand in need of counsel," he answered, "and what may that counsel be?" "Seven Cantrevs remain unto me," said Pryderi, "wherein Rhiannon my mother dwells. I will bestow her upon thee and the seven Cantrevs with her, and though thou hadst no possessions but those Cantrevs only, thou couldst not have seven Cantrevs fairer than they. Kicva, the daughter of Gwynn Gloyw, is my wife, and since the inheritance of the Cantrevs belongs to me, do thou and Rhiannon enjoy them, and if thou ever desire any possessions thou wilt take these." "I do not, Chieftain," said he; "Heaven reward thee for thy friendship." "I would show thee the best friendship in the world if thou wouldst let me." "I will, my friend," said he, "and Heaven reward thee. I will go with thee to seek Rhiannon and to look at thy possessions." "Thou wilt do well," he answered. "And I believe that thou didst never hear a lady discourse better than she, and when she was in her prime none was ever fairer. Even now her aspect is not uncomely."

They set forth, and, however long the journey, they came at length to Dyved, and a feast was prepared for them against their coming to Narberth, which Rhiannon and Kicva had provided. Then began Manawyddan and Rhiannon to sit and to talk together, and from their discourse his mind and his thoughts became warmed towards her, and he thought in his heart he had never beheld any lady more fulfilled of grace and beauty than she. "Pryderi," said he, "I will that it be as thou didst say." "What saying was that?" asked Rhiannon. "Lady," said Pryderi, "I did offer thee as a wife to Manawyddan the son of Llyr." "By that will I gladly abide," said Rhiannon.

“Right glad am I also,” said Manawyddan; “may Heaven reward him who hath shown unto me friendship so perfect as this.”

And before the feast was over she became his bride. Said Pryderi, “Tarry ye here the rest of the feast, and I will go into Lloegyr to tender my homage unto Caswallawn the son of Beli.” “Lord,” said Rhiannon, “Caswallawn is in Kent, thou mayest therefore tarry at the feast, and wait until he shall be nearer.” “We will wait,” he answered. So they finished the feast. And they began to make the circuit of Dyved, and to hunt, and to take their pleasure. And as they went through the country, they had never seen lands more pleasant to live in, nor better hunting grounds, nor greater plenty of honey and fish. And such was the friendship between those four, that they would not be parted from each other by night nor by day.

And in the midst of all this he went to Caswallawn at Oxford, and tendered his homage; and honourable was his reception there, and highly was he praised for offering his homage.

And after his return, Pryderi and Manawyddan feasted and took their ease and pleasure. And they began a feast at Narberth, for it was the chief palace; and there originated all honour. And when they had ended the first meal that night, while those who served them ate, they arose and went forth, and proceeded all four to the Gorsedd of Narberth, and their retinue with them. And as they sat thus, behold, a peal of thunder, and with the violence of the thunderstorm, lo there came a fall of mist, so thick that not one of them could see the other. And after the mist it became light all around. And when they looked towards the place where they were wont to see cattle, and herds, and dwellings, they saw nothing now, neither house, nor beast, nor smoke, nor fire, nor man, nor dwelling; but the houses of the Court empty, and desert, and uninhabited, without either man or beast within them. And truly all their companions were lost to them, without their knowing aught of what had befallen them, save those four only.

“In the name of Heaven,” cried Manawyddan, “where are they of the Court, and all my host beside these? Let us go and see.” So they came into the hall, and there was no man; and they went on to the castle and to the sleeping-place, and they saw none; and in the mead-cellar and in the kitchen

there was nought but desolation. So they four feasted, and hunted, and took their pleasure. Then they began to go through the land and all the possessions that they had, and they visited the houses and dwellings, and found nothing but wild beasts. And when they had consumed their feast and all their provisions, they fed upon the prey they killed in hunting, and the honey of the wild swarms. And thus they passed the first year pleasantly, and the second; but at the last they began to be weary.

“Verily,” said Manawyddan, “we must not bide thus. Let us go into Lloegyr, and seek some craft whereby we may gain our support.” So they went into Lloegyr, and came as far as Hereford. And they betook themselves to making saddles. And Manawyddan began to make housings, and he gilded and coloured them with blue enamel, in the manner that he had seen it done by Llasar Llaesgywydd. And he made the blue enamel as it was made by the other man. And therefore is it still called Calch Lasar (blue enamel), because Llasar Llaesgywydd had wrought it.

And as long as that workmanship could be had of Manawyddan, neither saddle nor housing was bought of a saddler throughout all Hereford; till at length every one of the saddlers perceived that they were losing much of their gain, and that no man bought of them, but him who could not get what he sought from Manawyddan. Then they assembled together, and agreed to slay him and his companions.

Now they received warning of this, and took counsel whether they should leave the city. “By Heaven,” said Pryderi, “it is not my counsel that we should quit the town, but that we should slay these boors.” “Not so,” said Manawyddan, “for if we fight with them, we shall have evil fame, and shall be put in prison. It were better for us to go to another town to maintain ourselves.” So they four went to another city.

“What craft shall we take?” said Pryderi. “We will make shields,” said Manawyddan. “Do we know anything about that craft?” said Pryderi. “We will try,” answered he. There they began to make shields, and fashioned them after the shape of the good shields they had seen; and they enamelled them, as they had done the saddles. And they prospered in that place, so that not a shield was asked for in the whole town, but such as was had of them.

Rapid therefore was their work, and numberless were the shields they made. But at last they were marked by the craftsmen, who came together in haste, and their fellow-townsmen with them, and agreed that they should seek to slay them. But they received warning, and heard how the men had resolved on their destruction. "Pryderi," said Manawyddan, "these men desire to slay us." "Let us not endure this from these boors, but let us rather fall upon them and slay them." "Not so," he answered; "Caswallawn and his men will hear of it, and we shall be undone. Let us go to another town." So to another town they went.

"What craft shall we take?" said Manawyddan. "Whatsoever thou wilt that we know," said Pryderi. "Not so," he replied, "but let us take to making shoes, for there is not courage enough among cordwainers either to fight with us or to molest us." "I know nothing thereof," said Pryderi. "But I know," answered Manawyddan; "and I will teach thee to stitch. We will not attempt to dress the leather, but we will buy it ready dressed and will make the shoes from it."

So he began by buying the best cordwal that could be had in the town, and none other would he buy except the leather for the soles; and he associated himself with the best goldsmith in the town, and caused him to make clasps for the shoes, and to gild the clasps, and he marked how it was done until he learnt the method. And therefore was he called one of the three makers of Gold Shoes; and, when they could be had from him, not a shoe nor hose was bought of any of the cordwainers in the town. But when the cordwainers perceived that their gains were failing (for as Manawyddan shaped the work, so Pryderi stitched it), they came together and took counsel, and agreed that they would slay them.

"Pryderi," said Manawyddan, "these men are minded to slay us." "Wherefore should we bear this from the boorish thieves?" said Pryderi. "Rather let us slay them all." "Not so," said Manawyddan, "we will not slay them, neither will we remain in Lloegyr any longer. Let us set forth to Dyved and go to see it."

So they journeyed along until they came to Dyved, and they went forward to Narberth. And there they kindled fire and supported themselves



by hunting. And thus they spent a month. And they gathered their dogs around them, and tarried there one year.

And one morning Pryderi and Manawyddan rose up to hunt, and they ranged their dogs and went forth from the palace. And some of the dogs ran before them and came to a small bush which was near at hand; but as soon as they were come to the bush, they hastily drew back and returned to the men, their hair bristling up greatly. "Let us go near to the bush," said Pryderi, "and see what is in it." And as they came near, behold, a wild boar of a pure white colour rose up from the bush. Then the dogs, being set on by the men, rushed towards him; but he left the bush and fell back a little way from the men, and made a stand against the dogs without retreating from them, until the men had come near. And when the men came up, he fell back a second time, and betook him to flight. Then they pursued the boar until they beheld a vast and lofty castle, all newly built, in a place where they had never before seen either stone or building. And the boar ran swiftly into the castle and the dogs after him. Now when the boar and the dogs had gone into the castle, they began to wonder at finding a castle in a place where they had never before seen any building whatsoever. And from the top of the Gorsedd they looked and listened for the dogs. But so long as they were there they heard not one of the dogs nor aught concerning them.

"Lord," said Pryderi, "I will go into the castle to get tidings of the dogs." "Truly," he replied, "thou wouldst be unwise to go into this castle, which thou hast never seen till now. If thou wouldst follow my counsel, thou wouldst not enter therein. Whosoever has cast a spell over this land has caused this castle to be here." "Of a truth," answered Pryderi, "I cannot thus give up my dogs." And for all the counsel that Manawyddan gave him, yet to the castle he went.

When he came within the castle, neither man nor beast, nor boar nor dogs, nor house nor dwelling saw he within it. But in the centre of the castle floor he beheld a fountain with marble work around it, and on the margin of the fountain a golden bowl upon a marble slab, and chains hanging from the air, to which he saw no end.

And he was greatly pleased with the beauty of the gold, and with the rich workmanship of the bowl, and he went up to the bowl and laid hold of it. And when he had taken hold of it his hands stuck to the bowl, and his feet to the slab on which the bowl was placed, and all his joyousness forsook him, so that he could not utter a word. And thus he stood.

And Manawyddan waited for him till near the close of the day. And late in the evening, being certain that he should have no tidings of Pryderi or of the dogs, he went back to the palace. And as he entered, Rhiannon looked at him. "Where," said she, "are thy companion and thy dogs?" "Behold," he answered, "the adventure that has befallen me." And he related it all unto her. "An evil companion hast thou been," said Rhiannon, "and a good companion hast thou lost." And with that word she went out, and proceeded towards the castle according to the direction which he gave her. The gate of the castle she found open. She was nothing daunted, and she went in. And as she went in, she perceived Pryderi laying hold of the bowl, and she went towards him. "Oh, my lord," said she, "what dost thou do here?" And she took hold of the bowl with him; and as she did so her hands became fast to the bowl, and her feet to the slab, and she was not able to utter a word. And with that, as it became night, lo, there came thunder upon them, and a fall of mist, and thereupon the castle vanished, and they with it.

When Kicva the daughter of Gwynn Gloyw saw that there was no one in the palace but herself and Manawyddan, she sorrowed so that she cared not whether she lived or died. And Manawyddan saw this. "Thou art in the wrong," said he, "if through fear of me thou grievest thus. I call Heaven to witness that thou hast never seen friendship more pure than that which I will bear thee, as long as Heaven will that thou shouldst be thus. I declare to thee that were I in the dawn of youth I would keep my faith unto Pryderi, and unto thee also will I keep it. Be there no fear upon thee, therefore," said he, "for Heaven is my witness that thou shalt meet with all the friendship thou canst wish, and that it is in my power to show thee, as long as it shall please Heaven to continue us in this grief and woe." "Heaven reward thee," she said, "and that is what I deemed of thee." And the damsel thereupon took courage and was glad.

“Truly, lady,” said Manawyddan, “it is not fitting for us to stay here, we have lost our dogs, and we cannot get food. Let us go into Lloegyr; it is easiest for us to find support there.” “Gladly, lord,” said she, “we will do so.” And they set forth together to Lloegyr.

“Lord,” said she, “what craft wilt thou follow? Take up one that is seemly.” “None other will I take,” answered he, “save that of making shoes, as I did formerly.” “Lord,” said she, “such a craft becomes not a man so nobly born as thou.” “By that however will I abide,” said he.

So he began his craft, and he made all his work of the finest leather he could get in the town, and, as he had done at the other place, he caused gilded clasps to be made for the shoes. And except himself all the cordwainers in the town were idle, and without work. For as long as they could be had from him, neither shoes nor hose were bought elsewhere. And thus they tarried there a year, until the cordwainers became envious, and took counsel concerning him. And he had warning thereof, and it was told him how the cordwainers had agreed together to slay him.

“Lord,” said Kicva, “wherefore should this be borne from these boors?” “Nay,” said he, “we will go back unto Dyved.” So towards Dyved they set forth.

Now Manawyddan, when he set out to return to Dyved, took with him a burden of wheat. And he proceeded towards Narberth, and there he dwelt. And never was he better pleased than when he saw Narberth again, and the lands where he had been wont to hunt with Pryderi and with Rhiannon. And he accustomed himself to fish, and to hunt the deer in their covert. And then he began to prepare some ground, and he sowed a croft, and a second, and a third. And no wheat in the world ever sprung up better. And the three crofts prospered with perfect growth, and no man ever saw fairer wheat than it.

And thus passed the seasons of the year until the harvest came. And he went to look at one of his crofts, and behold it was ripe. “I will reap this tomorrow,” said he. And that night he went back to Narberth, and on the morrow in the grey dawn he went to reap the croft, and when he came there he found nothing but the bare straw. Every one of the ears of the wheat was

cut from off the stalk, and all the ears carried entirely away, and nothing but the straw left. And at this he marvelled greatly.

Then he went to look at another croft, and behold that also was ripe. “Verily,” said he, “this will I reap to-morrow.” And on the morrow he came with the intent to reap it, and when he came there he found nothing but the bare straw. “Oh, gracious Heaven,” he exclaimed, “I know that whosoever has begun my ruin is completing it, and has also destroyed the country with me.”

Then he went to look at the third croft, and when he came there, finer wheat had there never been seen, and this also was ripe. “Evil betide me,” said he, “if I watch not here to-night. Whoever carried off the other corn will come in like manner to take this. And I will know who it is.” So he took his arms, and began to watch the croft. And he told Kicva all that had befallen. “Verily,” said she, “what thinkest thou to do?” “I will watch the croft to-night,” said he.

And he went to watch the croft. And at midnight, lo, there arose the loudest tumult in the world. And he looked, and behold the mightiest host of mice in the world, which could neither be numbered nor measured. And he knew not what it was until the mice had made their way into the croft, and each of them climbing up the straw and bending it down with its weight, had cut off one of the ears of wheat, and had carried it away, leaving there the stalk, and he saw not a single stalk there that had not a mouse to it. And they all took their way, carrying the ears with them.

In wrath and anger did he rush upon the mice, but he could no more come up with them than if they had been gnats, or birds in the air, except one only, which though it was but sluggish, went so fast that a man on foot could scarce overtake it. And after this one he went, and he caught it and put it in his glove, and tied up the opening of the glove with a string, and kept it with him, and returned to the palace. Then he came to the hall where Kicva was, and he lighted a fire, and hung the glove by the string upon a peg. “What hast thou there, lord?” said Kicva. “A thief,” said he, “that I found robbing me.” “What kind of thief may it be, lord, that thou couldst put into thy glove?” said she. “Behold I will tell thee,” he answered. Then

he showed her how his fields had been wasted and destroyed, and how the mice came to the last of the fields in his sight. "And one of them was less nimble than the rest, and is now in my glove; to-morrow I will hang it, and before Heaven, if I had them, I would hang them all." "My lord," said she, "this is marvellous; but yet it would be unseemly for a man of dignity like thee to be hanging such a reptile as this. And if thou doest right, thou wilt not meddle with the creature, but wilt let it go." "Woe betide me," said he, "if I would not hang them all could I catch them, and such as I have I will hang." "Verily, lord," said she, "there is no reason that I should succour this reptile, except to prevent discredit unto thee. Do therefore, lord, as thou wilt." "If I knew of any cause in the world wherefore thou shouldst succour it, I would take thy counsel concerning it," said Manawyddan, "but as I know of none, lady, I am minded to destroy it." "Do so willingly then," said she.

And then he went to the Gorsedd of Narberth, taking the mouse with him. And he set up two forks on the highest part of the Gorsedd. And while he was doing this, behold he saw a scholar coming towards him, in old and poor and tattered garments. And it was now seven years since he had seen in that place either man or beast, except those four persons who had remained together until two of them were lost.

"My lord," said the scholar, "good day to thee." "Heaven prosper thee, and my greeting be unto thee. And whence dost thou come, scholar?" asked he. "I come, lord, from singing in Lloegyr; and wherefore dost thou inquire?" "Because for the last seven years," answered he, "I have seen no man here save four secluded persons, and thyself this moment." "Truly, lord," said he, "I go through this land unto mine own. And what work art thou upon, lord?" "I am hanging a thief that I caught robbing me," said he. "What manner of thief is that?" asked the scholar. "I see a creature in thy hand like unto a mouse, and ill does it become a man of rank equal to thine to touch a reptile such as this. Let it go forth free." "I will not let it go free, by Heaven," said he; "I caught it robbing me, and the doom of a thief will I inflict upon it, and I will hang it." "Lord," said he, "rather than see a man of rank equal to thine at such a work as this, I would give thee a pound which I

have received as alms, to let the reptile go forth free.” “I will not let it go free,” said he, “by Heaven, neither will I sell it.” “As thou wilt, lord,” he answered; “except that I would not see a man of rank equal to thine touching such a reptile, I care nought.” And the scholar went his way.

And as he was placing the crossbeam upon the two forks, behold a priest came towards him upon a horse covered with trappings. “Good day to thee, lord,” said he. “Heaven prosper thee,” said Manawyddan; “thy blessing.” “The blessing of Heaven be upon thee. And what, lord, art thou doing?” “I am hanging a thief that I caught robbing me,” said he. “What manner of thief, lord?” asked he. “A creature,” he answered, “in form of a mouse. It has been robbing me, and I am inflicting upon it the doom of a thief.” “Lord,” said he, “rather than see thee touch this reptile, I would purchase its freedom.” “By my confession to Heaven, neither will I sell it nor set it free.” “It is true, lord, that it is worth nothing to buy; but rather than see thee defile thyself by touching such a reptile as this, I will give thee three pounds to let it go.” “I will not, by Heaven,” said he, “take any price for at. As it ought, so shall it be hanged.” “Willingly, lord, do thy good pleasure.” And the priest went his way.

Then he noosed the string around the mouse’s neck, and as he was about to draw it up, behold, he saw a bishop’s retinue with his sumpter-horses, and his attendants. And the bishop himself came towards him. And he stayed his work. “Lord bishop,” said he, “thy blessing.” “Heaven’s blessing be unto thee,” said he; “what work art thou upon?” “Hanging a thief that I caught robbing me,” said he. “Is not that a mouse that I see in thy hand?” “Yes,” answered he. “And she has robbed me.” “Aye,” said he, “since I have come at the doom of this reptile, I will ransom it of thee. I will give thee seven pounds for it, and that rather than see a man of rank equal to thine destroying so vile a reptile as this. Let it loose and thou shalt have the money.” “I declare to Heaven that I will not set it loose.” “If thou wilt not loose it for this, I will give thee four-and-twenty pounds of ready money to set it free.” “I will not set it free, by Heaven, for as much again,” said he. “If thou wilt not set it free for this, I will give thee all the horses that thou seest in this plain, and the seven loads of baggage, and the seven horses that

they are upon.” “By Heaven, I will not,” he replied. “Since for this thou wilt not, do so at what price soever thou wilt.” “I will do so,” said he. “I will that Rhiannon and Pryderi be free,” said he. “That thou shalt have,” he answered. “Not yet will I loose the mouse, by Heaven.” “What then wouldst thou?” “That the charm and the illusion be removed from the seven Cantrevs of Dyved.” “This shalt thou have also; set therefore the mouse free.” “I will not set it free, by Heaven,” said he. “I will know who the mouse may be.” “She is my wife.” “Even though she be, I will not set her free. Wherefore came she to me?” “To despoil thee,” he answered. “I am Llwyd the son of Kilcoed, and I cast the charm over the seven Cantrevs of Dyved. And it was to avenge Gwawl the son of Clud, from the friendship I had towards him, that I cast the charm. And upon Pryderi did I revenge Gwawl the son of Clud, for the game of Badger in the Bag, that Pwyll Pen Annwryn played upon him, which he did unadvisedly in the Court of Heveydd Hên. And when it was known that thou wast come to dwell in the land, my household came and besought me to transform them into mice, that they might destroy thy corn. And it was my own household that went the first night. And the second night also they went, and they destroyed thy two crofts. And the third night came unto me my wife and the ladies of the Court, and besought me to transform them. And I transformed them. Now she is pregnant. And had she not been pregnant thou wouldst not have been able to overtake her; but since this has taken place, and she has been caught, I will restore thee Pryderi and Rhiannon; and I will take the charm and illusion from off Dyved. I have now told thee who she is. Set her therefore free.” “I will not set her free, by Heaven,” said he. “What wilt thou more?” he asked. “I will that there be no more charm upon the seven Cantrevs of Dyved, and that none shall be put upon it henceforth.” “This thou shalt have,” said he. “Now set her free.” “I will not, by my faith,” he answered. “What wilt thou furthermore?” asked he. “Behold,” said he, “this will I have; that vengeance be never taken for this, either upon Pryderi or Rhiannon, or upon me.” “All this shalt thou have. And truly thou hast done wisely in asking this. Upon thy head would have lighted all this trouble.” “Yea,” said he, “for fear thereof was it, that I required this.” “Set now my

wife at liberty.” “I will not, by Heaven,” said he, “until I see Pryderi and Rhiannon with me free.” “Behold, here they come,” he answered.

And thereupon behold Pryderi and Rhiannon. And he rose up to meet them, and greeted them, and sat down beside them. “Ah, Chieftain, set now my wife at liberty,” said the bishop. “Hast thou not received all thou didst ask?” “I will release her gladly,” said he. And thereupon he set her free.

Then Llwyd struck her with a magic wand, and she was changed back into a young woman, the fairest ever seen.

“Look around upon thy land,” said he, “and then thou wilt see it all tilled and peopled, as it was in its best state.” And he rose up and looked forth. And when he looked he saw all the lands tilled, and full of herds and dwellings. “What bondage,” he inquired, “has there been upon Pryderi and Rhiannon?” “Pryderi has had the knockers of the gate of my palace about his neck, and Rhiannon has had the collars of the asses, after they have been carrying hay, about her neck.”

And such had been their bondage.

And by reason of this bondage is this story called the Mabinogi of Mynnweir and Mynord.

And thus ends this portion of the Mabinogi.

## **Math the Son of Mathonwy**

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### **This is the Fourth Portion of the Mabinogi**

Math the son of Mathonwy was lord over Gwynedd, and Pryderi the son of Pwyll was lord over the one-and-twenty Cantreys of the South; and these were the seven Cantreys of Dyved, and the seven Cantreys of Morganwc, the four Cantreys of Ceredigiawn, and the three of Ystrad Tywi.

At that time, Math the son of Mathonwy could not exist unless his feet were in the lap of a maiden, except only when he was prevented by the tumult of war. Now the maiden who was with him was Goewin, the



daughter of Pebin of Dôl Pebin, in Arvon, and she was the fairest maiden of her time who was known there.

And Math dwelt always at Caer Dathyl, in Arvon, and was not able to go the circuit of the land, but Gilvaethwy the son of Don, and Eneyd the son of Don, his nephews, the sons of his sisters, with his household, went the circuit of the land in his stead.

Now the maiden was with Math continually, and Gilvaethwy the son of Don set his affections upon her, and loved her so that he knew not what he should do because of her, and therefrom behold his hue, and his aspect, and his spirits changed for love of her, so that it was not easy to know him.

One day his brother Gwydion gazed steadfastly upon him. "Youth," said he, "what aileth thee?" "Why," replied he, "what seest thou in me?" "I see," said he, "that thou hast lost thy aspect and thy hue; what, therefore, aileth thee?" "My lord brother," he answered, "that which aileth me, it will not profit me that I should own to any." "What may it be, my soul?" said he. "Thou knowest," he said, "that Math the son of Mathonwy has this property, that if men whisper together, in a tone how low soever, if the wind meet it, it becomes known unto him." "Yes," said Gwydion, "hold now thy peace, I know thy intent, thou lovest Goewin."

When he found that his brother knew his intent, he gave the heaviest sigh in the world. "Be silent, my soul, and sigh not," he said. "It is not thereby that thou wilt succeed. I will cause," said he, "if it cannot be otherwise, the rising of Gwynedd, and Powys, and Deheubarth, to seek the maiden. Be thou of glad cheer therefore, and I will compass it."

So they went unto Math the son of Mathonwy. "Lord," said Gwydion, "I have heard that there have come to the South some beasts, such as were never known in this island before." "What are they called?" he asked. "Pigs, lord." "And what kind of animals are they?" "They are small animals, and their flesh is better than the flesh of oxen." "They are small, then?" "And they change their names. Swine are they now called." "Who owneth them?" "Pryderi the son of Pwyll; they were sent him from Annwryn, by Arawn the king of Annwryn, and still they keep that name, half hog, half pig." "Verily," asked he, "and by what means may they be obtained from him?"

“I will go, lord, as one of twelve, in the guise of bards, to seek the swine.” “But it may be that he will refuse you,” said he. “My journey will not be evil, lord,” said he; “I will not come back without the swine.” “Gladly,” said he, “go thou forward.”

So he and Gilvaethwy went, and ten other men with them. And they came into Ceredigiawn, to the place that is now called Rhuddlan Teivi, where the palace of Pryderi was. In the guise of bards they came in, and they were received joyfully, and Gwydion was placed beside Pryderi that night.

“Of a truth,” said Pryderi, “gladly would I have a tale from some of your men yonder.” “Lord,” said Gwydion, “we have a custom that the first night that we come to the Court of a great man, the chief of song recites. Gladly will I relate a tale.” Now Gwydion was the best teller of tales in the world, and he diverted all the Court that night with pleasant discourse and with tales, so that he charmed every one in the Court, and it pleased Pryderi to talk with him.

And after this, “Lord,” said he unto Pryderi, “were it more pleasing to thee, that another should discharge my errand unto thee, than that I should tell thee myself what it is?” “No,” he answered, “ample speech hast thou.” “Behold then, lord,” said he, “my errand. It is to crave from thee the animals that were sent thee from Annwvyn.” “Verily,” he replied, “that were the easiest thing in the world to grant, were there not a covenant between me and my land concerning them. And the covenant is that they shall not go from me, until they have produced double their number in the land.” “Lord,” said he, “I can set thee free from those words, and this is the way I can do so; give me not the swine to-night, neither refuse them unto me, and to-morrow I will show thee an exchange for them.”

And that night he and his fellows went unto their lodging, and they took counsel. “Ah, my men,” said he, “we shall not have the swine for the asking.” “Well,” said they, “how may they be obtained?” “I will cause them to be obtained,” said Gwydion.

Then he betook himself to his arts, and began to work a charm. And he caused twelve chargers to appear, and twelve black greyhounds, each of

them white-breasted, and having upon them twelve collars and twelve leashes, such as no one that saw them could know to be other than gold. And upon the horses twelve saddles, and every part which should have been of iron was entirely of gold, and the bridles were of the same workmanship. And with the horses and the dogs he came to Pryderi.

“Good day unto thee, lord,” said he. “Heaven prosper thee,” said the other, “and greetings be unto thee.” “Lord,” said he, “behold here is a release for thee from the word which thou spakest last evening concerning the swine; that thou wouldst neither give nor sell them. Thou mayest exchange them for that which is better. And I will give these twelve horses, all caparisoned as they are, with their saddles and their bridles, and these twelve greyhounds, with their collars and their leashes as thou seest, and the twelve gilded shields that thou beholdest yonder.” Now these he had formed of fungus. “Well,” said he, “we will take counsel.” And they consulted together, and determined to give the swine to Gwydion, and to take his horses and his dogs and his shields.

Then Gwydion and his men took their leave, and began to journey forth with the pigs. “Ah, my comrades,” said Gwydion, “it is needful that we journey with speed. The illusion will not last but from the one hour to the same to-morrow.”

And that night they journeyed as far as the upper part of Ceredigiawn, to the place which, from that cause, is called Mochdrev still. And the next day they took their course through Melenydd, and came that night to the town which is likewise for that reason called Mochdrev between Keri and Arwystli. And thence they journeyed forward; and that night they came as far as that Commot in Powys, which also upon account thereof is called Mochnant, and there tarried they that night. And they journeyed thence to the Cantrev of Rhos, and the place where they were that night is still called Mochdrev.

“My men,” said Gwydion, “we must push forward to the fastnesses of Gwynedd with these animals, for there is a gathering of hosts in pursuit of us.” So they journeyed on to the highest town of Arllechwedd, and there they made a sty for the swine, and therefore was the name of Creuwyrion

given to that town. And after they had made the sty for the swine, they proceeded to Math the son of Mathonwy, at Caer Dathyl. And when they came there, the country was rising. "What news is there here?" asked Gwydion. "Pryderi is assembling one-and-twenty Cantrevs to pursue after you," answered they. "It is marvellous that you should have journeyed so slowly." "Where are the animals whereof you went in quest?" said Math. "They have had a sty made for them in the other Cantrev below," said Gwydion.

Thereupon, lo, they heard the trumpets and the host in the land, and they arrayed themselves and set forward and came to Penardd in Arvon.

And at night Gwydion the son of Don, and Gilvaethwy his brother, returned to Caer Dathyl; and Gilvaethwy took Math the son of Mathonwy's couch. And while he turned out the other damsels from the room discourteously, he made Goewin unwillingly remain.

And when they saw the day on the morrow, they went back unto the place where Math the son of Mathonwy was with his host; and when they came there, the warriors were taking counsel in what district they should await the coming of Pryderi, and the men of the South. So they went in to the council. And it was resolved to wait in the strongholds of Gwynedd, in Arvon. So within the two Maenors they took their stand, Maenor Penardd and Maenor Coed Alun. And there Pryderi attacked them, and there the combat took place. And great was the slaughter on both sides; but the men of the South were forced to flee. And they fled unto the place which is still called Nantcall. And thither did they follow them, and they made a vast slaughter of them there, so that they fled again as far as the place called Dol Pen Maen, and there they halted and sought to make peace.

And that he might have peace, Pryderi gave hostages, Gwrgi Gwastra gave he and three-and-twenty others, sons of nobles. And after this they journeyed in peace even unto Traeth Mawr; but as they went on together towards Melenryd, the men on foot could not be restrained from shooting. Pryderi dispatched unto Math an embassy to pray him to forbid his people, and to leave it between him and Gwydion the son of Don, for that he had caused all this. And the messengers came to Math. "Of a truth," said Math,

“I call Heaven to witness, if it be pleasing unto Gwydion the son of Don, I will so leave it gladly. Never will I compel any to go to fight, but that we ourselves should do our utmost.”

“Verily,” said the messengers, “Pryderi saith that it were more fair that the man who did him this wrong should oppose his own body to his, and let his people remain unscathed.” “I declare to Heaven, I will not ask the men of Gwynedd to fight because of me. If I am allowed to fight Pryderi myself, gladly will I oppose my body to his.” And this answer they took back to Pryderi. “Truly,” said Pryderi, “I shall require no one to demand my rights but myself.”

Then these two came forth and armed themselves, and they fought. And by force of strength, and fierceness, and by the magic and charms of Gwydion, Pryderi was slain. And at Maen Tyriawc, above Melenryd, was he buried, and there is his grave.

And the men of the South set forth in sorrow towards their own land; nor is it a marvel that they should grieve, seeing that they had lost their lord, and many of their best warriors, and for the most part their horses and their arms.

The men of Gwynedd went back joyful and in triumph. “Lord,” said Gwydion unto Math, “would it not be right for us to release the hostages of the men of the South, which they pledged unto us for peace? for we ought not to put them in prison.” “Let them then be set free,” saith Math. So that youth, and the other hostages that were with him, were set free to follow the men of the South.

Math himself went forward to Caer Dathyl. Gilvaethwy the son of Don, and they of the household that were with him, went to make the circuit of Gwynedd as they were wont, without coming to the Court. Math went into his chamber, and caused a place to be prepared for him whereon to recline, so that he might put his feet in the maiden’s lap. “Lord,” said Goewin, “seek now another to hold thy feet, for I am now a wife.” “What meaneth this?” said he. “An attack, lord, was made unawares upon me; but I held not my peace, and there was no one in the Court who knew not of it. Now the attack was made by thy nephews, lord, the sons of thy sister, Gwydion the

son of Don, and Gilvaethwy the son of Don; unto me they did wrong, and unto thee dishonour.” “Verily,” he exclaimed, “I will do to the utmost of my power concerning this matter. But first I will cause thee to have compensation, and then will I have amends made unto myself. As for thee, I will take thee to be my wife, and the possession of my dominions will I give unto thy hands.”

And Gwydion and Gilvaethwy came not near the Court, but stayed in the confines of the land until it was forbidden to give them meat and drink. At first they came not near unto Math, but at the last they came. “Lord,” said they, “good day to thee.” “Well,” said he, “is it to make me compensation that ye are come?” “Lord,” they said, “we are at thy will.” “By my will I would not have lost my warriors, and so many arms as I have done. You cannot compensate me my shame, setting aside the death of Pryderi. But since ye come hither to be at my will, I shall begin your punishment forthwith.”

Then he took his magic wand, and struck Gilvaethwy, so that he became a deer, and he seized upon the other hastily lest he should escape from him. And he struck him with the same magic wand, and he became a deer also. “Since now ye are in bonds, I will that ye go forth together and be companions, and possess the nature of the animals whose form ye bear. And this day twelvemonth come hither unto me.”

At the end of a year from that day, lo there was a loud noise under the chamber wall, and the barking of the dogs of the palace together with the noise. “Look,” said he, “what is without.” “Lord,” said one, “I have looked; there are there two deer, and a fawn with them.” Then he arose and went out. And when he came he beheld the three animals. And he lifted up his wand. “As ye were deer last year, be ye wild hogs each and either of you, for the year that is to come.” And thereupon he struck them with the magic wand. “The young one will I take and cause to be baptized.” Now the name that he gave him was Hydwn. “Go ye and be wild swine, each and either of you, and be ye of the nature of wild swine. And this day twelvemonth be ye here under the wall.”

At the end of the year the barking of dogs was heard under the wall of the chamber. And the Court assembled, and thereupon he arose and went forth, and when he came forth he beheld three beasts. Now these were the beasts that he saw; two wild hogs of the woods, and a well-grown young one with them. And he was very large for his age. "Truly," said Math, "this one will I take and cause to be baptized." And he struck him with his magic wand, and he became a fine fair auburn-haired youth, and the name that he gave him was Hychdwn. "Now as for you, as ye were wild hogs last year, be ye wolves each and either of you for the year that is to come." Thereupon he struck them with his magic wand, and they became wolves. "And be ye of like nature with the animals whose semblance ye bear, and return here this day twelvemonth beneath this wall."

And at the same day at the end of the year, he heard a clamour and a barking of dogs under the wall of the chamber. And he rose and went forth. And when he came, behold, he saw two wolves, and a strong cub with them. "This one will I take," said Math, "and I will cause him to be baptized; there is a name prepared for him, and that is Bleiddwn. Now these three, such are they:—

The three sons of Gilvaethwy the false,  
The three faithful combatants,  
Bleiddwn, Hydwn, and Hychdwn the Tall."

Then he struck the two with his magic wand, and they resumed their own nature. "Oh men," said he, "for the wrong that ye did unto me sufficient has been your punishment and your dishonour. Prepare now precious ointment for these men, and wash their heads, and equip them." And this was done.

And after they were equipped, they came unto him. "Oh men," said he, "you have obtained peace, and you shall likewise have friendship. Give your counsel unto me, what maiden I shall seek." "Lord," said Gwydion the son of Don, "it is easy to give thee counsel; seek Arianrod, the daughter of Don, thy niece, thy sister's daughter."

And they brought her unto him, and the maiden came in. "Ha, damsel," said he, "art thou the maiden?" "I know not, lord, other than that I am." Then he took up his magic wand, and bent it. "Step over this," said he, "and I shall know if thou art the maiden." Then stepped she over the magic wand, and there appeared forthwith a fine chubby yellow-haired boy. And at the crying out of the boy, she went towards the door. And thereupon some small form was seen; but before any one could get a second glimpse of it, Gwydion had taken it, and had flung a scarf of velvet around it and hidden it. Now the place where he hid it was the bottom of a chest at the foot of his bed.

"Verily," said Math the son of Mathonwy, concerning the fine yellow-haired boy, "I will cause this one to be baptized, and Dylan is the name I will give him."

So they had the boy baptized, and as they baptized him he plunged into the sea. And immediately when he was in the sea, he took its nature, and swam as well as the best fish that was therein. And for that reason was he called Dylan, the son of the Wave. Beneath him no wave ever broke. And the blow whereby he came to his death, was struck by his uncle Govannon. The third fatal blow was it called.

As Gwydion lay one morning on his bed awake, he heard a cry in the chest at his feet; and though it was not loud, it was such that he could hear it. Then he arose in haste, and opened the chest: and when he opened it, he beheld an infant boy stretching out his arms from the folds of the scarf, and casting it aside. And he took up the boy in his arms, and carried him to a place where he knew there was a woman that could nurse him. And he agreed with the woman that she should take charge of the boy. And that year he was nursed.

And at the end of the year he seemed by his size as though he were two years old. And the second year he was a big child, and able to go to the Court by himself. And when he came to the Court, Gwydion noticed him, and the boy became familiar with him, and loved him better than any one else. Then was the boy reared at the Court until he was four years old, when he was as big as though he had been eight.



And one day Gwydion walked forth, and the boy followed him, and he went to the Castle of Arianrod, having the boy with him; and when he came into the Court, Arianrod arose to meet him, and greeted him and bade him welcome. "Heaven prosper thee," said he. "Who is the boy that followeth thee?" she asked. "This youth, he is thy son," he answered. "Alas," said she, "what has come unto thee that thou shouldst shame me thus? wherefore dost thou seek my dishonour, and retain it so long as this?" "Unless thou suffer dishonour greater than that of my bringing up such a boy as this, small will be thy disgrace." "What is the name of the boy?" said she. "Verily," he replied, "he has not yet a name." "Well," she said, "I lay this destiny upon him, that he shall never have a name until he receives one from me." "Heaven bears me witness," answered he, "that thou art a wicked woman. But the boy shall have a name how displeasing soever it may be unto thee. As for thee, that which afflicts thee is that thou art no longer called a damsel." And thereupon he went forth in wrath, and returned to Caer Dathyl and there he tarried that night.

And the next day he arose and took the boy with him, and went to walk on the seashore between that place and Aber Menei. And there he saw some sedges and seaweed, and he turned them into a boat. And out of dry sticks and sedges he made some Cordovan leather, and a great deal thereof, and he coloured it in such a manner that no one ever saw leather more beautiful than it. Then he made a sail to the boat, and he and the boy went in it to the port of the castle of Arianrod. And he began forming shoes and stitching them, until he was observed from the castle. And when he knew that they of the castle were observing him, he disguised his aspect, and put another semblance upon himself, and upon the boy, so that they might not be known. "What men are those in yonder boat?" said Arianrod. "They are cordwainers," answered they. "Go and see what kind of leather they have, and what kind of work they can do."

So they came unto them. And when they came he was colouring some Cordovan leather, and gilding it. And the messengers came and told her this. "Well," said she, "take the measure of my foot, and desire the cordwainer to make shoes for me." So he made the shoes for her, yet not

according to the measure, but larger. The shoes then were brought unto her, and behold they were too large. "These are too large," said she, "but he shall receive their value. Let him also make some that are smaller than they." Then he made her others that were much smaller than her foot, and sent them unto her. "Tell him that these will not go on my feet," said she. And they told him this. "Verily," said he, "I will not make her any shoes, unless I see her foot." And this was told unto her. "Truly," she answered, "I will go unto him."

So she went down to the boat, and when she came there, he was shaping shoes and the boy stitching them. "Ah, lady," said he, "good day to thee." "Heaven prosper thee," said she. "I marvel that thou canst not manage to make shoes according to a measure." "I could not," he replied, "but now I shall be able."

Thereupon behold a wren stood upon the deck of the boat, and the boy shot at it, and hit it in the leg between the sinew and the bone. Then she smiled. "Verily," said she, "with a steady hand did the lion aim at it." "Heaven reward thee not, but now has he got a name. And a good enough name it is. Llew Llaw Gyffes be he called henceforth."

Then the work disappeared in seaweed and sedges, and he went on with it no further. And for that reason was he called the third Gold-shoemaker. "Of a truth," said she, "thou wilt not thrive the better for doing evil unto me." "I have done thee no evil yet," said he. Then he restored the boy to his own form. "Well," said she, "I will lay a destiny upon this boy, that he shall never have arms and armour until I invest him with them." "By Heaven," said he, "let thy malice be what it may, he shall have arms."

Then they went towards Dinas Dinlley, and there he brought up Llew Llaw Gyffes, until he could manage any horse, and he was perfect in features, and strength, and stature. And then Gwydion saw that he languished through the want of horses and arms. And he called him unto him. "Ah, youth," said he, "we will go to-morrow on an errand together. Be therefore more cheerful than thou art." "That I will," said the youth.

Next morning, at the dawn of day, they arose. And they took way along the sea coast, up towards Bryn Aryen. And at the top of Cevn Clydno they

equipped themselves with horses, and went towards the Castle of Arianrod. And they changed their form, and pricked towards the gate in the semblance of two youths, but the aspect of Gwydion was more staid than that of the other. "Porter," said he, "go thou in and say that there are here bards from Glamorgan." And the porter went in. "The welcome of Heaven be unto them, let them in," said Arianrod.

With great joy were they greeted. And the hall was arranged, and they went to meat. When meat was ended, Arianrod discoursed with Gwydion of tales and stories. Now Gwydion was an excellent teller of tales. And when it was time to leave off feasting, a chamber was prepared for them, and they went to rest.

In the early twilight Gwydion arose, and he called unto him his magic and his power. And by the time that the day dawned, there resounded through the land uproar, and trumpets and shouts. When it was now day, they heard a knocking at the door of the chamber, and therewith Arianrod asking that it might be opened. Up rose the youth and opened unto her, and she entered and a maiden with her. "Ah, good men," she said, "in evil plight are we." "Yes, truly," said Gwydion, "we have heard trumpets and shouts; what thinkest thou that they may mean?" "Verily," said she, "we cannot see the colour of the ocean by reason of all the ships, side by side. And they are making for the land with all the speed they can. And what can we do?" said she. "Lady," said Gwydion, "there is none other counsel than to close the castle upon us, and to defend it as best we may." "Truly," said she, "may Heaven reward you. And do you defend it. And here may you have plenty of arms."

And thereupon went she forth for the arms, and behold she returned, and two maidens, and suits of armour for two men, with her. "Lady," said he, "do you accoutre this stripling, and I will arm myself with the help of thy maidens. Lo, I hear the tumult of the men approaching." "I will do so, gladly." So she armed him fully, and that right cheerfully. "Hast thou finished arming the youth?" said he. "I have finished," she answered. "I likewise have finished," said Gwydion. "Let us now take off our arms, we have no need of them." "Wherefore?" said she. "Here is the army around

the house.” “Oh, lady, there is here no army.” “Oh,” cried she, “whence then was this tumult?” “The tumult was but to break thy prophecy and to obtain arms for thy son. And now has he got arms without any thanks unto thee.” “By Heaven,” said Arianrod, “thou art a wicked man. Many a youth might have lost his life through the uproar thou hast caused in this Cantrev to-day. Now will I lay a destiny upon this youth,” she said, “that he shall never have a wife of the race that now inhabits this earth.” “Verily,” said he, “thou wast ever a malicious woman, and no one ought to support thee. A wife shall he have notwithstanding.”

They went thereupon unto Math the son of Mathonwy, and complained unto him most bitterly of Arianrod. Gwydion showed him also how he had procured arms for the youth. “Well,” said Math, “we will seek, I and thou, by charms and illusion, to form a wife for him out of flowers. He has now come to man’s stature, and he is the comeliest youth that was ever beheld.” So they took the blossoms of the oak, and the blossoms of the broom, and the blossoms of the meadow-sweet, and produced from them a maiden, the fairest and most graceful that man ever saw. And they baptized her, and gave her the name of Blodeuwedd.

After she had become his bride, and they had feasted, said Gwydion, “It is not easy for a man to maintain himself without possessions.” “Of a truth,” said Math, “I will give the young man the best Cantrev to hold.” “Lord,” said he, “what Cantrev is that?” “The Cantrev of Dinodig,” he answered. Now it is called at this day Eivionydd and Ardudwy. And the place in the Cantrev where he dwelt, was a palace of his in a spot called Mur y Castell, on the confines of Ardudwy. There dwelt he and reigned, and both he and his sway were beloved by all.

One day he went forth to Caer Dathyl, to visit Math the son of Mathonwy. And on the day that he set out for Caer Dathyl, Blodeuwedd walked in the Court. And she heard the sound of a horn. And after the sound of the horn, behold a tired stag went by, with dogs and huntsmen following it. And after the dogs and the huntsmen there came a crowd of men on foot. “Send a youth,” said she, “to ask who yonder host may be.” So

a youth went, and inquired who they were. "Gronw Pebyr is this, the lord of Penllyn," said they. And thus the youth told her.

Gronw Pebyr pursued the stag, and by the river Cynvael he overtook the stag and killed it. And what with flaying the stag and baiting his dogs, he was there until the night began to close in upon him. And as the day departed and the night drew near, he came to the gate of the Court. "Verily," said Blodeuwedd, "the Chieftain will speak ill of us if we let him at this hour depart to another land without inviting him in." "Yes, truly, lady," said they, "it will be most fitting to invite him."

Then went messengers to meet him and bid him in. And he accepted her bidding gladly, and came to the Court, and Blodeuwedd went to meet him, and greeted him, and bade him welcome. "Lady," said he, "Heaven repay thee thy kindness."

When they had disaccoutred themselves, they went to sit down. And Blodeuwedd looked upon him, and from the moment that she looked on him she became filled with his love. And he gazed on her, and the same thought came unto him as unto her, so that he could not conceal from her that he loved her, but he declared unto her that he did so. Thereupon she was very joyful. And all their discourse that night was concerning the affection and love which they felt one for the other, and which in no longer space than one evening had arisen. And that evening passed they in each other's company.

The next day he sought to depart. But she said, "I pray thee go not from me to-day." And that night he tarried also. And that night they consulted by what means they might always be together. "There is none other counsel," said he, "but that thou strive to learn from Llew Llaw Gyffes in what manner he will meet his death. And this must thou do under the semblance of solicitude concerning him."

The next day Gronw sought to depart. "Verily," said she, "I will counsel thee not to go from me to-day." "At thy instance will I not go," said he, "albeit, I must say, there is danger that the chief who owns the palace may return home." "To-morrow," answered she, "will I indeed permit thee to go forth."

The next day he sought to go, and she hindered him not. "Be mindful," said Gronw, "of what I have said unto thee, and converse with him fully, and that under the guise of the dalliance of love, and find out by what means he may come to his death."

That night Llew Llaw Gyffes returned to his home. And the day they spent in discourse, and minstrelsy, and feasting. And at night they went to rest, and he spoke to Blodeuwedd once, and he spoke to her a second time. But, for all this, he could not get from her one word. "What aileth thee?" said he, "art thou well?" "I was thinking," said she, "of that which thou didst never think of concerning me; for I was sorrowful as to thy death, lest thou shouldst go sooner than I." "Heaven reward thy care for me," said he, "but until Heaven take me I shall not easily be slain." "For the sake of Heaven, and for mine, show me how thou mightest be slain. My memory in guarding is better than thine." "I will tell thee gladly," said he. "Not easily can I be slain, except by a wound. And the spear wherewith I am struck must be a year in the forming. And nothing must be done towards it except during the sacrifice on Sundays." "Is this certain?" asked she. "It is in truth," he answered. "And I cannot be slain within a house, nor without. I cannot be slain on horseback nor on foot." "Verily," said she, "in what manner then canst thou be slain?" "I will tell thee," said he. "By making a bath for me by the side of a river, and by putting a roof over the cauldron, and thatching it well and tightly, and bringing a buck, and putting it beside the cauldron. Then if I place one foot on the buck's back, and the other on the edge of the cauldron, whosoever strikes me thus will cause my death." "Well," said she, "I thank Heaven that it will be easy to avoid this."

No sooner had she held this discourse than she sent to Gronw Pebyr. Gronw toiled at making the spear, and that day twelvemonth it was ready. And that very day he caused her to be informed thereof.

"Lord," said Blodeuwedd unto Llew, "I have been thinking how it is possible that what thou didst tell me formerly can be true; wilt thou show me in what manner thou couldst stand at once upon the edge of a cauldron and upon a buck, if I prepare the bath for thee?" "I will show thee," said he.

Then she sent unto Gronw, and bade him be in ambush on the hill which is now called Bryn Kyvergyr, on the bank of the river Cynvael. She caused also to be collected all the goats that were in the Cantrev, and had them brought to the other side of the river, opposite Bryn Kyvergyr.

And the next day she spoke thus. "Lord," said she, "I have caused the roof and the bath to be prepared, and lo! they are ready." "Well," said Llew, "we will go gladly to look at them."

The day after they came and looked at the bath. "Wilt thou go into the bath, lord?" said she. "Willingly will I go in," he answered. So into the bath he went, and he anointed himself. "Lord," said she, "behold the animals which thou didst speak of as being called bucks." "Well," said he, "cause one of them to be caught and brought here." And the buck was brought. Then Llew rose out of the bath, and put on his trowsers, and he placed one foot on the edge of the bath and the other on the buck's back.

Thereupon Gronw rose up from the bill which is called Bryn Kyvergyr, and he rested on one knee, and flung the poisoned dart and struck him on the side, so that the shaft started out, but the head of the dart remained in. Then he flew up in the form of an eagle and gave a fearful scream. And thenceforth was he no more seen.

As soon as he departed Gronw and Blodeuwedd went together unto the palace that night. And the next day Gronw arose and took possession of Ardudwy. And after he had overcome the land, he ruled over it, so that Ardudwy and Penllyn were both under his sway.

Then these tidings reached Math the son of Mathonwy. And heaviness and grief came upon Math, and much more upon Gwydion than upon him. "Lord," said Gwydion, "I shall never rest until I have tidings of my nephew." "Verily," said Math, "may Heaven be thy strength." Then Gwydion set forth and began to go forward. And he went through Gwynedd and Powys to the confines. And when he had done so, he went into Arvon, and came to the house of a vassal, in Maenawr Penardd. And he alighted at the house, and stayed there that night. The man of the house and his household came in, and last of all came there the swineherd. Said the man of the house to the swineherd, "Well, youth, hath thy sow come in to-night?" "She

hath,” said he, “and is this instant returned to the pigs.” “Where doth this sow go to?” said Gwydion. “Every day, when the sty is opened, she goeth forth and none can catch sight of her, neither is it known whither she goeth more than if she sank into the earth.” “Wilt thou grant unto me,” said Gwydion, “not to open the sty until I am beside the sty with thee?” “This will I do, right gladly,” he answered.

That night they went to rest; and as soon as the swineherd saw the light of day, he awoke Gwydion. And Gwydion arose and dressed himself, and went with the swineherd, and stood beside the sty. Then the swineherd opened the sty. And as soon as he opened it, behold she leaped forth, and set off with great speed. And Gwydion followed her, and she went against the course of a river, and made for a brook, which is now called Nant y Llew. And there she halted and began feeding. And Gwydion came under the tree, and looked what it might be that the sow was feeding on. And he saw that she was eating putrid flesh and vermin. Then looked he up to the top of the tree, and as he looked he beheld on the top of the tree an eagle, and when the eagle shook itself, there fell vermin and putrid flesh from off it, and these the sow devoured. And it seemed to him that the eagle was Llew. And he sang an Englyn:—

“Oak that grows between the two banks;  
Darkened is the sky and hill!  
Shall I not tell him by his wounds,  
That this is Llew?”

Upon this the eagle came down until he reached the centre of the tree. And Gwydion sang another Englyn:—

“Oak that grows in upland ground,  
Is it not wetted by the rain? Has it not been drenched  
By nine score tempests?  
It bears in its branches Llew Llaw Gyffes!”



Then the eagle came down until he was on the lowest branch of the tree, and thereupon this Englyn did Gwydion sing:—

“Oak that grows beneath the steep;  
Stately and majestic is its aspect!  
Shall I not speak it?  
That Llew will come to my lap?”

And the eagle came down upon Gwydion’s knee. And Gwydion struck him with his magic wand, so that he returned to his own form. No one ever saw a more piteous sight, for he was nothing but skin and bone.

Then he went unto Caer Dathyl, and there were brought unto him good physicians that were in Gwynedd, and before the end of the year he was quite healed.

“Lord,” said he unto Math the son of Mathonwy, “it is full time now that I have retribution of him by whom I have suffered all this woe.” “Truly,” said Math, “he will never be able to maintain himself in the possession of that which is thy right.” “Well,” said Llew, “the sooner I have my right, the better shall I be pleased.”

Then they called together the whole of Gwynedd, and set forth to Ardudwy. And Gwydion went on before and proceeded to Mur y Castell. And when Blodeuwedd heard that he was coming, she took her maidens with her, and fled to the mountain. And they passed through the river Cynvael, and went towards a court that there was upon the mountain, and through fear they could not proceed except with their faces looking backwards, so that unawares they fell into the lake. And they were all drowned except Blodeuwedd herself, and her Gwydion overtook. And he said unto her, “I will not slay thee, but I will do unto thee worse than that. For I will turn thee into a bird; and because of the shame thou hast done unto Llew Llaw Gyffes, thou shalt never show thy face in the light of day henceforth; and that through fear of all the other birds. For it shall be their nature to attack thee, and to chase thee from wheresoever they may find thee. And thou shalt not lose thy name, but shalt be always called

Blodeuwedd.” Now Blodeuwedd is an owl in the language of this present time, and for this reason is the owl hateful unto all birds. And even now the owl is called Blodeuwedd.

Then Gronw Pebyr withdrew unto Penllyn, and he dispatched thence an embassy. And the messengers he sent asked Llew Llaw Gyffes if he would take land, or domain, or gold, or silver, for the injury he had received. “I will not, by my confession to Heaven,” said he. “Behold this is the least that I will accept from him; that he come to the spot where I was when he wounded me with the dart, and that I stand where he did, and that with a dart I take my aim at him. And this is the very least that I will accept.”

And this was told unto Gronw Pebyr. “Verily,” said he, “is it needful for me to do thus? My faithful warriors, and my household, and my foster-brothers, is there not one among you who will stand the blow in my stead?” “There is not, verily,” answered they. And because of their refusal to suffer one stroke for their lord, they are called the third disloyal tribe even unto this day. “Well,” said he, “I will meet it.”

Then they two went forth to the banks of the river Cynvael, and Gronw stood in the place where Llew Llaw Gyffes was when he struck him, and Llew in the place where Gronw was. Then said Gronw Pebyr unto Llew, “Since it was through the wiles of a woman that I did unto thee as I have done, I adjure thee by Heaven to let me place between me and the blow, the slab thou seest yonder on the river’s bank.” “Verily,” said Llew, “I will not refuse thee this.” “Ah,” said he, “may Heaven reward thee.” So Gronw took the slab and placed it between him and the blow.

Then Llew flung the dart at him, and it pierced the slab and went through Gronw likewise, so that it pierced through his back. And thus was Gronw Pebyr slain. And there is still the slab on the bank of the river Cynvael, in Ardudwy, having the hole through it. And therefore is it even now called Llech Gronw.

A second time did Llew Llaw Gyffes take possession of the land, and prosperously did he govern it. And, as the story relates, he was lord after this over Gwynedd. And thus ends this portion of the Mabinogi.

# The Dream of Maxen Wledig

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Maxen Wledig was emperor of Rome, and he was a comelier man, and a better and a wiser than any emperor that had been before him. And one day he held a council of kings, and he said to his friends, "I desire to go to-morrow to hunt." And the next day in the morning he set forth with his retinue, and came to the valley of the river that flowed towards Rome. And he hunted through the valley until mid-day. And with him also were two-and-thirty crowned kings, that were his vassals; not for the delight of hunting went the emperor with them, but to put himself on equal terms with those kings.

And the sun was high in the sky over their heads and the heat was great. And sleep came upon Maxen Wledig. And his attendants stood and set up their shields around him upon the shafts of their spears to protect him from the sun, and they placed a gold enamelled shield under his head; and so Maxen slept.

And he saw a dream. And this is the dream that he saw. He was journeying along the valley of the river towards its source; and he came to the highest mountain in the world. And he thought that the mountain was as high as the sky; and when he came over the mountain, it seemed to him that he went through the fairest and most level regions that man ever yet beheld, on the other side of the mountain. And he saw large and mighty rivers descending from the mountain to the sea, and towards the mouths of the rivers he proceeded. And as he journeyed thus, he came to the mouth of the largest river ever seen. And he beheld a great city at the entrance of the river, and a vast castle in the city, and he saw many high towers of various colours in the castle. And he saw a fleet at the mouth of the river, the largest ever seen. And he saw one ship among the fleet; larger was it by far, and fairer than all the others. Of such part of the ship as he could see above the water, one plank was gilded and the other silvered over. He saw a bridge of the bone of a whale from the ship to the land, and he thought that he went

along the bridge, and came into the ship. And a sail was hoisted on the ship, and along the sea and the ocean was it borne. Then it seemed that he came to the fairest island in the whole world, and he traversed the island from sea to sea, even to the furthest shore of the island. Valleys he saw, and steeps, and rocks of wondrous height, and rugged precipices. Never yet saw he the like. And thence he beheld an island in the sea, facing this rugged land. And between him and this island was a country of which the plain was as large as the sea, the mountain as vast as the wood. And from the mountain he saw a river that flowed through the land and fell into the sea. And at the mouth of the river he beheld a castle, the fairest that man ever saw, and the gate of the castle was open, and he went into the castle. And in the castle he saw a fair hall, of which the roof seemed to be all gold, the walls of the hall seemed to be entirely of glittering precious gems, the doors all seemed to be of gold. Golden seats he saw in the hall, and silver tables. And on a seat opposite to him he beheld two auburn-haired youths playing at chess. He saw a silver board for the chess, and golden pieces thereon. The garments of the youths were of jet-black satin, and chaplets of ruddy gold bound their hair, whereon were sparkling jewels of great price, rubies, and gems, alternately with imperial stones. Buskins of new Cordovan leather on their feet, fastened by slides of red gold.

And beside a pillar in the hall he saw a hoary-headed man, in a chair of ivory, with the figures of two eagles of ruddy gold thereon. Bracelets of gold were upon his arms, and many rings were on his hands, and a golden torque about his neck; and his hair was bound with a golden diadem. He was of powerful aspect. A chessboard of gold was before him, and a rod of gold, and a steel file in his hand. And he was carving out chessmen.

And he saw a maiden sitting before him in a chair of ruddy gold. Not more easy than to gaze upon the sun when brightest, was it to look upon her by reason of her beauty. A vest of white silk was upon the maiden, with clasps of red gold at the breast; and a surcoat of gold tissue upon her, and a frontlet of red gold upon her head, and rubies and gems were in the frontlet, alternating with pearls and imperial stones. And a girdle of ruddy gold was around her. She was the fairest sight that man ever beheld.

The maiden arose from her chair before him, and he threw his arms about the neck of the maiden, and they two sat down together in the chair of gold: and the chair was not less roomy for them both, than for the maiden alone. And as he had his arms about the maiden's neck, and his cheek by her cheek, behold, through the chafing of the dogs at their leashing, and the clashing of the shields as they struck against each other, and the beating together of the shafts of the spears, and the neighing of the horses and their prancing, the emperor awoke.

And when he awoke, nor spirit nor existence was left him, because of the maiden whom he had seen in his sleep, for the love of the maiden pervaded his whole frame. Then his household spake unto him. "Lord," said they, "is it not past the time for thee to take thy food?" Thereupon the emperor mounted his palfrey, the saddest man that mortal ever saw, and went forth towards Rome.

And thus he was during the space of a week. When they of the household went to drink wine and mead out of golden vessels, he went not with any of them. When they went to listen to songs and tales, he went not with them there; neither could he be persuaded to do anything but sleep. And as often as he slept, he beheld in his dreams the maiden he loved best; but except when he slept he saw nothing of her, for he knew not where in the world she was.

One day the page of the chamber spake unto him; now, although he was page of the chamber, he was king of the Romans. "Lord," said he, "all the people revile thee." "Wherefore do they revile me?" asked the emperor. "Because they can get neither message nor answer from thee as men should have from their lord. This is the cause why thou art spoken evil of." "Youth," said the emperor, "do thou bring unto me the wise men of Rome, and I will tell them wherefore I am sorrowful."

Then the wise men of Rome were brought to the emperor, and he spake to them. "Sages of Rome," said he, "I have seen a dream. And in the dream I beheld a maiden, and because of the maiden is there neither life, nor spirit, nor existence within me." "Lord," they answered, "since thou judgest us worthy to counsel thee, we will give thee counsel. And this is our counsel;

that thou send messengers for three years to the three parts of the world to seek for thy dream. And as thou knowest not what day or what night good news may come to thee, the hope thereof will support thee.”

So the messengers journeyed for the space of a year, wandering about the world, and seeking tidings concerning his dream. But when they came back at the end of the year, they knew not one word more than they did the day they set forth. And then was the emperor exceeding sorrowful, for he thought that he should never have tidings of her whom best he loved.

Then spoke the king of the Romans unto the emperor. “Lord,” said he, “go forth to hunt by the way thou didst seem to go, whether it were to the east, or to the west.” So the emperor went forth to the hunt, and he came to the bank of the river. “Behold,” said he, “this is where I was when I saw the dream, and I went towards the source of the river westward.”

And thereupon thirteen messengers of the emperor’s set forth, and before them they saw a high mountain, which seemed to them to touch the sky. Now this was the guise in which the messengers journeyed; one sleeve was on the cap of each of them in front, as a sign that they were messengers, in order that through what hostile land soever they might pass no harm might be done them. And when they were come over this mountain, they beheld vast plains, and large rivers flowing there through.

“Behold,” said they, “the land which our master saw.”

And they went along the mouths of the rivers, until they came to the mighty river which they saw flowing to the sea, and the vast city, and the many-coloured high towers in the castle. They saw the largest fleet in the world, in the harbour of the river, and one ship that was larger than any of the others. “Behold again,” said they, “the dream that our master saw.” And in the great ship they crossed the sea, and came to the Island of Britain. And they traversed the island until they came to Snowdon. “Behold,” said they, “the rugged land that our master saw.” And they went forward until they saw Anglesey before them, and until they saw Arvon likewise. “Behold,” said they, “the land our master saw in his sleep.” And they saw Aber Sain, and a castle at the mouth of the river. The portal of the castle saw they open, and into the castle they went, and they saw a hall in the castle. Then said

they, "Behold, the hall which he saw in his sleep." They went into the hall, and they beheld two youths playing at chess on the golden bench. And they beheld the hoary-headed man beside the pillar, in the ivory chair, carving chessmen. And they beheld the maiden sitting on a chair of ruddy gold.

The messengers bent down upon their knees. "Empress of Rome, all hail!" "Ha, gentles," said the maiden, "ye bear the seeming of honourable men, and the badge of envoys, what mockery is this ye do to me?" "We mock thee not, lady; but the Emperor of Rome hath seen thee in his sleep, and he has neither life nor spirit left because of thee. Thou shalt have of us therefore the choice, lady, whether thou wilt go with us and be made empress of Rome, or that the emperor come hither and take thee for his wife?" "Ha, lords," said the maiden, "I will not deny what ye say, neither will I believe it too well. If the emperor love me, let him come here to seek me."

And by day and night the messengers hied them back. And when their horses failed, they bought other fresh ones. And when they came to Rome, they saluted the emperor, and asked their boon, which was given to them according as they named it. "We will be thy guides, lord," said they, "over sea and over land, to the place where is the woman whom best thou lovest, for we know her name, and her kindred, and her race."

And immediately the emperor set forth with his army. And these men were his guides. Towards the Island of Britain they went over the sea and the deep. And he conquered the Island from Beli the son of Manogan, and his sons, and drove them to the sea, and went forward even unto Arvon. And the emperor knew the land when he saw it. And when he beheld the castle of Aber Sain, "Look yonder," said he, "there is the castle wherein I saw the damsel whom I best love." And he went forward into the castle and into the hall, and there he saw Kynan the son of Eudav, and Adeon the son of Eudav, playing at chess. And he saw Eudav the son of Caradawc, sitting on a chair of ivory carving chessmen. And the maiden whom he had beheld in his sleep, he saw sitting on a chair of gold. "Empress of Rome," said he, "all hail!" And the emperor threw his arms about her neck; and that night she became his bride.

And the next day in the morning, the damsel asked her maiden portion. And he told her to name what she would. And she asked to have the Island of Britain for her father, from the Channel to the Irish Sea, together with the three adjacent Islands, to hold under the empress of Rome; and to have three chief castles made for her, in whatever places she might choose in the Island of Britain. And she chose to have the highest castle made at Arvon. And they brought thither earth from Rome that it might be more healthful for the emperor to sleep, and sit, and walk upon. After that the two other castles were made for her, which were Caerlleon and Caermarthen.

And one day the emperor went to hunt at Caermarthen, and he came so far as the top of Brevi Vawr, and there the emperor pitched his tent. And that encamping place is called Cadeir Maxen, even to this day. And because that he built the castle with a myriad of men, he called it Caervyrddin. Then Helen bethought her to make high roads from one castle to another throughout the Island of Britain. And the roads were made. And for this cause are they called the roads of Helen Luyddawc, that she was sprung from a native of this island, and the men of the Island of Britain would not have made these great roads for any save for her.

Seven years did the emperor tarry in this Island. Now, at that time, the men of Rome had a custom, that whatsoever emperor should remain in other lands more than seven years should remain to his own overthrow, and should never return to Rome again.

So they made a new emperor. And this one wrote a letter of threat to Maxen. There was nought in the letter but only this. "If thou comest, and if thou ever comest to Rome." And even unto Caerlleon came this letter to Maxen, and these tidings. Then sent he a letter to the man who styled himself emperor in Rome. There was nought in that letter also but only this. "If I come to Rome, and if I come."

And thereupon Maxen set forth towards Rome with his army, and vanquished France and Bugundy, and every land on the way, and sat down before the city of Rome.

A year was the emperor before the city, and he was no nearer taking it than the first day. And after him there came the brothers of Helen



Luyddawc from the Island of Britain, and a small host with them, and better warriors were in that small host than twice as many Romans. And the emperor was told that a host was seen, halting close to his army and encamping, and no man ever saw a fairer or better appointed host for its size, nor more handsome standards.

And Helen went to see the hosts, and she knew the standards of her brothers. Then came Kynan the son of Eudav, and Adeon the son of Eudav, to meet the emperor. And the emperor was glad because of them, and embraced them.

Then they looked at the Romans as they attacked the city. Said Kynan to his brother, "We will try to attack the city more expertly than this." So they measured by night the height of the wall, and they sent their carpenters to the wood, and a ladder was made for every four men of their number. Now when these were ready, every day at mid-day the emperors went to meat, and they ceased to fight on both sides till all had finished eating. And in the morning the men of Britain took their food and they drank until they were invigorated. And while the two emperors were at meat, the Britons came to the city, and placed their ladders against it, and forthwith they came in through the city.

The new emperor had no time to arm himself when they fell upon him, and slew him, and many others with him. And three nights and three days were they subduing the men that were in the city and taking the castle. And others of them kept the city, lest any of the host of Maxen should come therein, until they had subjected all to their will.

Then spake Maxen to Helen Luyddawc. "I marvel, lady," said he, "that thy brothers have not conquered this city for me." "Lord, emperor," she answered, "the wisest youths in the world are my brothers. Go thou thither and ask the city of them, and if it be in their possession thou shalt have it gladly." So the emperor and Helen went and demanded the city. And they told the emperor that none had taken the city, and that none could give it him, but the men of the Island of Britain. Then the gates of the city of Rome were opened, and the emperor sat on the throne, and all the men of Rome submitted them selves unto him.

The emperor then said unto Kynan and Adeon, “Lords,” said he, “I have now had possession of the whole of my empire. This host give I unto you to vanquish whatever region ye may desire in the world.”

So they set forth and conquered lands, and castles, and cities. And they slew all the men, but the women they kept alive. And thus they continued until the young men that had come with them were grown grey-headed, from the length of time they were upon this conquest.

Then spoke Kynan unto Adeon his brother, “Whether wilt thou rather,” said he, “tarry in this land, or go back into the land whence thou didst come forth?” Now he chose to go back to his own land, and many with him. But Kynan tarried there with the other part and dwelt there.

And they took counsel and cut out the tongues of the women, lest they should corrupt their speech. And because of the silence of the women from their own speech, the men of Armorica are called Britons. From that time there came frequently, and still comes, that language from the Island of Britain.

And this dream is called the Dream of Maxen Wledig, emperor of Rome. And here it ends.

## **Here is the Story of Lludd and Llevelys**

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Beli the Great, the son of Manogan, had three sons, Lludd, and Caswallawn, and Nynyaw; and according to the story he had a fourth son called Llevelys. And after the death of Beli, the kingdom of the Island of Britain fell into the hands of Llud his eldest son; and Lludd ruled prosperously, and rebuilt the walls of London, and encompassed it about with numberless towers. And after that he bade the citizens build houses therein, such as no houses in the kingdoms could equal. And moreover he was a mighty warrior, and generous and liberal in giving meat and drink to all that sought them. And though he had many castles and cities this one loved he more than any. And he dwelt therein most part of the year, and therefore was it called Caer

Lludd, and at last Caer London. And after the stranger-race came there, it was called London, or Lwndrys.

Lludd loved Llevelys best of all his brothers, because he was a wise and discreet man. Having heard that the king of France had died, leaving no heir except a daughter, and that he had left all his possessions in her hands, he came to Lludd his brother, to beseech his counsel and aid. And that not so much for his own welfare, as to seek to add to the glory and honour and dignity of his kindred, if he might go to France to woo the maiden for his wife. And forthwith his brother conferred with him, and this counsel was pleasing unto him.

So he prepared ships and filled them with armed knights, and set forth towards France. And as soon as they had landed, they sent messengers to show the nobles of France the cause of the embassy. And by the joint counsel of the nobles of France and of the princes, the maiden was given to Llevelys, and the crown of the kingdom with her. And thenceforth he ruled the land discreetly, and wisely, and happily, as long as his life lasted.

After a space of time had passed, three plagues fell on the Island of Britain, such as none in the islands had ever seen the like of. The first was a certain race that came, and was called the Coranians; and so great was their knowledge, that there was no discourse upon the face of the Island, however low it might be spoken, but what, if the wind met it, it was known to them. And through this they could not be injured.<sup>5</sup>

The second plague was a shriek which came on every May-eve, over every hearth in the Island of Britain. And this went through people's hearts, and so scared them, that the men lost their hue and their strength, and the women their children, and the young men and the maidens lost their senses, and all the animals and trees and the earth and the waters, were left barren.

The third plague was, that however much of provisions and food might be prepared in the king's courts, were there even so much as a year's provision of meat and drink, none of it could ever be found, except what was consumed in the first night. And two of these plagues, no one ever knew their cause, therefore was there better hope of being freed from the first than from the second and third.

And thereupon King Lludd felt great sorrow and care, because that he knew not how he might be freed from these plagues. And he called to him all the nobles of his kingdom, and asked counsel of them what they should do against these afflictions. And by the common counsel of the nobles, Lludd the son of Beli went to Llevelys his brother, king of France, for he was a man great of counsel and wisdom, to seek his advice.

And they made ready a fleet, and that in secret and in silence, lest that race should know the cause of their errand, or any besides the king and his counsellors. And when they were made ready, they went into their ships, Lludd and those whom he chose with him. And they began to cleave the seas towards France.

And when these tidings came to Llevelys, seeing that he knew not the cause of his brother's ships, he came on the other side to meet him, and with him was a fleet vast of size. And when Lludd saw this, he left all the ships out upon the sea except one only; and in that one he came to meet his brother, and he likewise with a single ship came to meet him. And when they were come together, each put his arms about the other's neck, and they welcomed each other with brotherly love.

After that Lludd had shown his brother the cause of his errand, Llevelys said that he himself knew the cause of the coming to those lands. And they took counsel together to discourse on the matter otherwise than thus, in order that the wind might not catch their words, nor the Coranians know what they might say. Then Llevelys caused a long horn to be made of brass, and through this horn they discoursed. But whatsoever words they spoke through this horn, one to the other, neither of them could hear any other but harsh and hostile words. And when Llevelys saw this, and that there was a demon thwarting them and disturbing through this horn, he caused wine to be put therein to wash it. And through the virtue of the wine the demon was driven out of the horn. And when their discourse was unobstructed, Llevelys told his brother that he would give him some insects whereof he should keep some to breed, lest by chance the like affliction might come a second time. And other of these insects he should take and bruise in water. And he assured him that it would have power to destroy the race of the

Coranians. That is to say, that when he came home to his kingdom he should call together all the people both of his own race and of the race of the Coranians for a conference, as though with the intent of making peace between them; and that when they were all together, he should take this charmed water, and cast it over all alike. And he assured him that the water would poison the race of the Coranians, but that it would not slay or harm those of his own race.

“And the second plague,” said he, “that is in thy dominion, behold it is a dragon. And another dragon of a foreign race is fighting with it, and striving to overcome it. And therefore does your dragon make a fearful outcry. And on this wise mayest thou come to know this. After thou hast returned home, cause the Island to be measured in its length and breadth, and in the place where thou dost find the exact central point, there cause a pit to be dug, and cause a cauldron full of the best mead that can be made to be put in the pit, with a covering of satin over the face of the cauldron. And then, in thine own person do thou remain there watching, and thou wilt see the dragon fighting in the form of terrific animals. And at length they will take the form of dragons in the air. And last of all, after wearying themselves with fierce and furious fighting, they will fall in the form of two pigs upon the covering, and they will sink in, and the covering with them, and they will draw it down to the very bottom of the cauldron. And they will drink up the whole of the mead; and after that they will sleep. Thereupon do thou immediately fold the covering around them, and bury them in a kistvaen, in the strongest place thou hast in thy dominions, and hide them in the earth. And as long as they shall bide in that strong place no plague shall come to the Island of Britain from elsewhere.

“The cause of the third plague,” said he, “is a mighty man of magic, who take thy meat and thy drink and thy store. And he through illusions and charms causes every one to sleep. Therefore it is needful for thee in thy own person to watch thy food and thy provisions. And lest he should overcome thee with sleep, be there a cauldron of cold water by thy side, and when thou art oppressed with sleep, plunge into the cauldron.”

Then Lludd returned back unto his land. And immediately he summoned to him the whole of his own race and of the Coranians. And as Llevelys had taught him, he bruised the insects in water, the which he cast over them all together, and forthwith it destroyed the whole tribe of the Coranians, without hurt to any of the Britons.

And some time after this, Lludd caused the Island to be measured in its length and in its breadth. And in Oxford he found the central point, and in that place he caused the earth to be dug, and in that pit a cauldron to be set, full of the best mead that could be made, and a covering of satin over the face of it. And he himself watched that night. And while he was there, he beheld the dragons fighting. And when they were weary they fell, and came down upon the top of the satin, and drew it with them to the bottom of the cauldron. And when they had drunk the mead they slept. And in their sleep, Lludd folded the covering around them, and in the securest place he had in Snowdon, he hid them in a kistvaen. Now after that this spot was called Dinas Emreis, but before that, Dinas Ffaraon. And thus the fierce outcry ceased in his dominions.

And when this was ended, King Lludd caused an exceeding great banquet to be prepared. And when it was ready, he placed a vessel of cold water by his side, and he in his own proper person watched it. And as he abode thus clad with arms, about the third watch of the night, lo, he heard many surpassing fascinations and various songs. And drowsiness urged him to sleep. Upon this, lest he should be hindered from his purpose and be overcome by sleep, he went often into the water. And at last, behold, a man of vast size, clad in strong, heavy armour, came in, bearing a hamper. And, as he was wont, he put all the food and provisions of meat and drink into the hamper, and proceeded to go with it forth. And nothing was ever more wonderful to Lludd, than that the hamper should hold so much.

And thereupon King Lludd went after him and spoke unto him thus. "Stop, stop," said he, "though thou hast done many insults and much spoil erewhile, thou shalt not do so any more, unless thy skill in arms and thy prowess be greater than mine."

Then he instantly put down the hamper on the floor, and awaited him. And a fierce encounter was between them, so that the glittering fire flew out from their arms. And at the last Lludd grappled with him, and fate bestowed the victory on Lludd. And he threw the plague to the earth. And after he had overcome him by strength and might, he besought his mercy. "How can I grant thee mercy," said the king, "after all the many injuries and wrongs that thou hast done me?" "All the losses that ever I have caused thee," said he, "I will make thee atonement for, equal to what I have taken. And I will never do the like from this time forth. But thy faithful vassal will I be." And the king accepted this from him.

And thus Lludd freed the Island of Britain from the three plagues. And from thenceforth until the end of his life, in prosperous peace did Lludd the son of Beli rule the Island of Britain. And this Tale is called the Story of Lludd and Llevellys. And thus it ends.

## **Taliesin**

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In times past there lived in Penllyn a man of gentle lineage, named Tegid Voel, and his dwelling was in the midst of the lake Tegid, and his wife was called Caridwen. And there was born to him of his wife a son named Morvran ab Tegid, and also a daughter named Creirwy, the fairest maiden in the world was she; and they had a brother, the most ill-favoured man in the world, Avagddu. Now Caridwen his mother thought that he was not likely to be admitted among men of noble birth, by reason of his ugliness, unless he had some exalted merits or knowledge. For it was in the beginning of Arthur's time and of the Round Table.

So she resolved, according to the arts of the books of the Fferyllt, to boil a cauldron of Inspiration and Science for her son, that his reception might be honourable because of his knowledge of the mysteries of the future state of the world.

Then she began to boil the cauldron, which from the beginning of its boiling might not cease to boil for a year and a day, until three blessed

drops were obtained of the grace of Inspiration.

And she put Gwion Bach the son of Gwreang of Llanfair in Caereinion, in Powys, to stir the cauldron, and a blind man named Morda to kindle the fire beneath it, and she charged them that they should not suffer it to cease boiling for the space of a year and a day. And she herself, according to the books of the astronomers, and in planetary hours, gathered every day of all charm-bearing herbs. And one day, towards the end of the year, as Caridwen was culling plants and making incantations, it chanced that three drops of the charmed liquor flew out of the cauldron and fell upon the finger of Gwion Bach. And by reason of their great heat he put his finger to his mouth, and the instant he put those marvel-working drops into his mouth, he foresaw everything that was to come, and perceived that his chief care must be to guard against the wiles of Caridwen, for vast was her skill. And in very great fear he fled towards his own land. And the cauldron burst in two, because all the liquor within it except the three charm-bearing drops was poisonous, so that the horses of Gwyddno Garanhir were poisoned by the water of the stream into which the liquor of the cauldron ran, and the confluence of that stream was called the Poison of the Horses of Gwyddno from that time forth.

Thereupon came in Caridwen and saw all the toil of the whole year lost. And she seized a billet of wood and struck the blind Morda on the head until one of his eyes fell out upon his cheek. And he said, "Wrongfully hast thou disfigured me, for I am innocent. Thy loss was not because of me." "Thou speakest truth," said Caridwen, "it was Gwion Bach who robbed me."

And she went forth after him, running. And he saw her, and changed himself into a hare and fled. But she changed herself into a greyhound and turned him. And he ran towards a river, and became a fish. And she in the form of an otter-bitch chased him under the water, until he was fain to turn himself into a bird of the air. She, as a hawk, followed him and gave him no rest in the sky. And just as she was about to stoop upon him, and he was in fear of death, he espied a heap of winnowed wheat on the floor of a barn, and he dropped among the wheat, and turned himself into one of the grains.



Then she transformed herself into a high-crested black hen, and went to the wheat and scratched it with her feet, and found him out and swallowed him. And, as the story says, she bore him nine months, and when she was delivered of him, she could not find it in her heart to kill him, by reason of his beauty. So she wrapped him in a leathern bag, and cast him into the sea to the mercy of God, on the twenty-ninth day of April.

And at that time the weir of Gwyddno was on the strand between Dyvi and Aberystwyth, near to his own castle, and the value of an hundred pounds was taken in that weir every May eve. And in those days Gwyddno had an only son named Elphin, the most hapless of youths, and the most needy. And it grieved his father sore, for he thought that he was born in an evil hour. And by the advice of his council, his father had granted him the drawing of the weir that year, to see if good luck would ever befall him, and to give him something wherewith to begin the world.

And the next day when Elphin went to look, there was nothing in the weir. But as he turned back he perceived the leathern bag upon a pole of the weir. Then said one of the weir-ward unto Elphin, "Thou wast never unlucky until to-night, and now thou hast destroyed the virtues of the weir, which always yielded the value of an hundred pounds every May eve, and to-night there is nothing but this leathern skin within it." "How now," said Elphin, "there may be therein the value of an hundred pounds." Well, they took up the leathern bag, and he who opened it saw the forehead of the boy, and said to Elphin, "Behold a radiant brow!"<sup>6</sup> "Taliesin be he called," said Elphin. And he lifted the boy in his arms, and lamenting his mischance, he placed him sorrowfully behind him. And he made his horse amble gently, that before had been trotting, and he carried him as softly as if he had been sitting in the easiest chair in the world. And presently the boy made a Consolation and praise to Elphin, and foretold honour to Elphin; and the Consolation was as you may see:—

"Fair Elphin, cease to lament!  
Let no one be dissatisfied with his own,  
To despair will bring no advantage.

No man sees what supports him;  
The prayer of Cynllo will not be in vain;  
God will not violate his promise.  
Never in Gwyddno's weir  
Was there such good luck as this night.  
Fair Elphin, dry thy cheeks!  
Being too sad will not avail.  
Although thou thinkest thou hast no gain,  
Too much grief will bring thee no good;  
Nor doubt the miracles of the Almighty:  
Although I am but little, I am highly gifted.  
From seas, and from mountains,  
And from the depths of rivers,  
God brings wealth to the fortunate man.  
Elphin of lively qualities,  
Thy resolution is unmanly;  
Thou must not be over sorrowful:  
Better to trust in God than to forbode ill.  
Weak and small as I am,  
On the foaming beach of the ocean,  
In the day of trouble I shall be  
Of more service to thee than three hundred salmon.  
Elphin of notable qualities,  
Be not displeased at thy misfortune;  
Although reclined thus weak in my bag,  
There lies a virtue in my tongue.  
While I continue thy protector  
Thou hast not much to fear;  
Remembering the names of the Trinity,  
None shall be able to harm thee."

And this was the first poem that Taliesin ever sang, being to console Elphin in his grief for that the produce of the weir was lost, and, what was

worse, that all the world would consider that it was through his fault and ill-luck. And then Gwyddno Garanhir<sup>7</sup> asked him what he was, whether man or spirit. Whereupon he sang this tale, and said:—

“First, I have been formed a comely person,  
In the court of Caridwen I have done penance;  
Though little I was seen, placidly received,  
I was great on the floor of the place to where I was led;  
I have been a prized defence, the sweet muse the cause,  
And by law without speech I have been liberated  
By a smiling black old hag, when irritated  
Dreadful her claim when pursued:  
I have fled with vigour, I have fled as a frog,  
I have fled in the semblance of a crow, scarcely finding rest;  
I have fled vehemently, I have fled as a chain,  
I have fled as a roe into an entangled thicket;  
I have fled as a wolf cub, I have fled as a wolf in a  
wilderness,  
I have fled as a thrush of portending language;  
I have fled as a fox, used to concurrent bounds of quirks;  
I have fled as a martin, which did not avail;  
I have fled as a squirrel, that vainly hides,  
I have fled as a stag’s antler, of ruddy course,  
I have fled as iron in a glowing fire,  
I have fled as a spear-head, of woe to such as has a wish for  
it;  
I have fled as a fierce hull bitterly fighting,  
I have fled as a bristly boar seen in a ravine,  
I have fled as a white grain of pure wheat,  
On the skirt of a hempen sheet entangled,  
That seemed of the size of a mare’s foal,  
That is filling like a ship on the waters;  
Into a dark leathern bag I was thrown,

And on a boundless sea I was sent adrift;  
Which was to me an omen of being tenderly nursed,  
And the Lord God then set me at liberty.”

Then came Elphin to the house or court of Gwyddno his father, and Taliesin with him. And Gwyddno asked him if he had had a good haul at the weir, and he told him that he had got that which was better than fish. “What was that?” said Gwyddno. “A Bard,” answered Elphin. Then said Gwyddno, “Alas, what will he profit thee?” And Taliesin himself replied and said, “He will profit him more than the weir ever profited thee.” Asked Gwyddno, “Art thou able to speak, and thou so little?” And Taliesin answered him, “I am better able to speak than thou to question me.” “Let me hear what thou canst say,” quoth Gwyddno. Then Taliesin sang:—

“In water there is a quality endowed with a blessing;  
On God it is most just to meditate aright;  
To God it is proper to supplicate with seriousness,  
Since no obstacle can there be to obtain a reward from him.  
Three times have I been born, I know by meditation;  
It were miserable for a person not to come and obtain  
All the sciences of the world, collected together in my  
breast,  
For I know what has been, what in future will occur.  
I will supplicate my Lord that I get refuge in him,  
A regard I may obtain in his grace;  
The Son of Mary is my trust, great in him is my delight,  
For in him is the world continually upholden.  
God has been to instruct me and to raise my expectation,  
The true Creator of heaven, who affords me protection;  
It is rightly intended that the saints should daily pray,  
For God, the renovator, will bring them to him.”

And forthwith Elphin gave his haul to his wife, and she nursed him tenderly and lovingly. Thenceforward Elphin increased in riches more and more day after day, and in love and favour with the king, and there abode Taliesin until he was thirteen years old, when Elphin son of Gwyddno went by a Christmas invitation to his uncle, Maelgwn Gwynedd, who some time after this held open court at Christmastide in the castle of Dyganwy, for all the number of his lords of both degrees, both spiritual and temporal, with a vast and thronged host of knights and squires. And amongst them there arose a discourse and discussion. And thus was it said.

“Is there in the whole world a king so great as Maelgwn, or one on whom Heaven has bestowed so many spiritual gifts as upon him? First, form, and beauty, and meekness, and strength, besides all the powers of the soul!” And together with these they said that Heaven had given one gift that exceeded all the others, which was the beauty, and comeliness, and grace, and wisdom, and modesty of his queen; whose virtues surpassed those of all the ladies and noble maidens throughout the whole kingdom. And with this they put questions one to another amongst themselves: Who had braver men? Who had fairer or swifter horses or greyhounds? Who had more skilful or wiser bards—than Maelgwn?

Now at that time the bards were in great favour with the exalted of the kingdom; and then none performed the office of those who are now called heralds, unless they were learned men, not only expert in the service of kings and princes, but studious and well versed in the lineage, and arms, and exploits of princes and kings, and in discussions concerning foreign kingdoms, and the ancient things of this kingdom, and chiefly in the annals of the first nobles; and also were prepared always with their answers in various languages, Latin, French, Welsh, and English. And together with this they were great chroniclers, and recorders, and skilful in framing verses, and ready in making englyns in every one of those languages. Now of these there were at that feast within the palace of Maelgwn as many as four-and-twenty, and chief of them all was one named Heinin Vardd.

When they had all made an end of thus praising the king and his gifts, it befell that Elphin spoke in this wise. “Of a truth none but a king may vie

with a king; but were he not a king, I would say that my wife was as virtuous as any lady in the kingdom, and also that I have a bard who is more skilful than all the king's bards." In a short space some of his fellows showed the king all the boastings of Elphin; and the king ordered him to be thrown into a strong prison, until he might know the truth as to the virtues of his wife, and the wisdom of his bard.

Now when Elphin had been put in a tower of the castle, with a thick chain about his feet (it is said that it was a silver chain, because he was of royal blood), the king, as the story relates, sent his son Rhun to inquire into the demeanour of Elphin's wife. Now Rhun was the most graceless man in the world, and there was neither wife nor maiden with whom he had held converse, but was evil spoken of. While Rhun went in haste towards Elphin's dwelling, being fully minded to bring disgrace upon his wife, Taliesin told his mistress how that the king had placed his master in durance in prison, and how that Rhun was coming in haste to strive to bring disgrace upon her. Wherefore he caused his mistress to array one of the maids of her kitchen in her apparel; which the noble lady gladly did; and she loaded her hands with the best rings that she and her husband possessed.

In this guise Taliesin caused his mistress to put the maiden to sit at the board in her room at supper, and he made her to seem as her mistress, and the mistress to seem as the maid. And when they were in due time seated at their supper in the manner that has been said, Rhun suddenly arrived at Elphin's dwelling, and was received with joy, for all the servants knew him plainly; and they brought him in haste to the room of their mistress, in the semblance of whom the maid rose up from supper and welcomed him gladly. And afterwards she sat down to supper again the second time, and Rhun with her. Then Rhun began jesting with the maid, who still kept the semblance of her mistress. And verily this story shows that the maiden became so intoxicated, that she fell asleep; and the story relates that it was a powder that Rhun put into the drink, that made her sleep so soundly that she never felt it when he cut from off her hand her little finger, whereupon was the signet ring of Elphin, which he had sent to his wife as a token, a short time before. And Rhun returned to the king with the finger and the ring as a

proof, to show that he had cut it from off her hand, without her awaking from her sleep of intemperance.

The king rejoiced greatly at these tidings, and he sent for his councillors, to whom he told the whole story from the beginning. And he caused Elphin to be brought out of his prison, and he chided him because of his boast. And he spake unto Elphin on this wise. "Elphin, be it known to thee beyond a doubt that it is but folly for a man to trust in the virtues of his wife further than he can see her; and that thou mayest be certain of thy wife's vileness, behold her finger, with thy signet ring upon it, which was cut from her hand last night, while she slept the sleep of intoxication." Then thus spake Elphin. "With thy leave, mighty king, I cannot deny my ring, for it is known of many; but verily I assert strongly that the finger around which it is, was never attached to the hand of my wife, for in truth and certainty there are three notable things pertaining to it, none of which ever belonged to any of my wife's fingers. The first of the three is, that it is certain, by your grace's leave, that wheresoever my wife is at this present hour, whether sitting, or standing, or lying down, this ring would never remain upon her thumb, whereas you can plainly see that it was hard to draw it over the joint of the little finger of the hand whence this was cut; the second thing is, that my wife has never let pass one Saturday since I have known her without paring her nails before going to bed, and you can see fully that the nail of this little finger has not been pared for a month. The third is, truly, that the hand whence this finger came was kneading rye dough within three days before the finger was cut therefrom, and I can assure your goodness that my wife has never kneaded rye dough since my wife she has been."

Then the king was mightily wroth with Elphin for so stoutly withstanding him, respecting the goodness of his wife, wherefore he ordered him to his prison a second time, saying that he should not be loosed thence until he had proved the truth of his boast, as well concerning the wisdom of his bard as the virtues of his wife.

In the meantime his wife and Taliesin remained joyful at Elphin's dwelling. And Taliesin showed his mistress how that Elphin was in prison

because of them, but he bade her be glad, for that he would go to Maelgwn's court to free his master. Then she asked him in what manner he would set him free. And he answered her:—

“A journey will I perform,  
And to the gate I will come;  
The hall I will enter,  
And my song I will sing;  
My speech I will pronounce  
To silence royal bards,  
In presence of their chief,  
I will greet to deride,  
Upon them I will break  
And Elphin I will free.  
Should contention arise,  
In presence of the prince,  
With summons to the bards,  
For the sweet flowing song,  
And wizards' posing lore  
And wisdom of Druids,  
In the court of the sons of the Distributor  
Some are who did appear  
Intent on wily schemes,  
By craft and tricking means,  
In pangs of affliction  
To wrong the innocent,  
Let the fools be silent,  
As erst in Badon's fight,—  
With Arthur of liberal ones  
The head, with long red blades;  
Through feats of testy men,  
And a chief with his foes.  
Woe be to them, the fools,



When revenge comes on them.  
I Taliesin, chief of bards,  
With a sapient Druid's words,  
Will set kind Elphin free  
From haughty tyrant's bonds.  
To their fell and chilling cry,  
By the act of a surprising steed,  
From the far distant North,  
There soon shall be an end.  
Let neither grace nor health  
Be to Maelgwn Gwynedd,  
For this force and this wrong;  
And be extremes of ills  
And an avenged end  
To Rhun and all his race:  
Short be his course of life,  
Be all his lands laid waste;  
And long exile be assigned  
To Maelgwn Gwynedd!"

After this he took leave of his mistress, and came at last to the Court of Maelgwn, who was going to sit in his hall and dine in his royal state, as it was the custom in those days for kings and princes to do at every chief feast. And as soon as Taliesin entered the hall, he placed himself in a quiet corner, near the place where the bards and the minstrels were wont to come in doing their service and duty to the king, as is the custom at the high festivals when the bounty is proclaimed. And so, when the bards and the heralds came to cry largess, and to proclaim the power of the king and his strength, at the moment that they passed by the corner wherein he was crouching, Taliesin pouted out his lips after them, and played "Blerwm, blerwm," with his finger upon his lips. Neither took they much notice of him as they went by, but proceeded forward till they came before the king, unto whom they made their obeisance with their bodies, as they were wont,

without speaking a single word, but pouting out their lips, and making mouths at the king, playing “Blerwm, blerwm,” upon their lips with their fingers, as they had seen the boy do elsewhere. This sight caused the king to wonder and to deem within himself that they were drunk with many liquors. Wherefore he commanded one of his lords, who served at the board, to go to them and desire them to collect their wits, and to consider where they stood, and what it was fitting for them to do. And this lord did so gladly. But they ceased not from their folly any more than before. Whereupon he sent to them a second time, and a third, desiring them to go forth from the hall. At the last the king ordered one of his squires to give a blow to the chief of them named Heinin Vardd; and the squire took a broom and struck him on the head, so that he fell back in his seat. Then he arose and went on his knees, and besought leave of the king’s grace to show that this their fault was not through want of knowledge, neither through drunkenness, but by the influence of some spirit that was in the hall. And after this Heinin spoke on this wise. “Oh, honourable king, be it known to your grace, that not from the strength of drink, or of too much liquor, are we dumb, without power of speech like drunken men, but through the influence of a spirit that sits in the corner yonder in the form of a child.” Forthwith the king commanded the squire to fetch him; and he went to the nook where Taliesin sat, and brought him before the king, who asked him what he was, and whence he came. And he answered the king in verse.

“Primary chief bard am I to Elphin,  
And my original country is the region of the summer stars;  
Idno and Heinin called me Merddin,  
At length every king will call me Taliesin.

I was with my Lord in the highest sphere,  
On the fall of Lucifer into the depth of hell  
I have borne a banner before Alexander;  
I know the names of the stars from north to south;  
I have been on the galaxy at the throne of the Distributor;

I was in Canaan when Absalom was slain;  
I conveyed the Divine Spirit to the level of the vale of  
Hebron;  
I was in the court of Don before the birth of Gwdion.  
I was instructor to Eli and Enoc;  
I have been winged by the genius of the splendid crosier;  
I have been loquacious prior to being gifted with speech;  
I was at the place of the crucifixion of the merciful Son of  
God;  
I have been three periods in the prison of Arianrod;  
I have been the chief director of the work of the tower of  
Nimrod;  
I am a wonder whose origin is not known.  
I have been in Asia with Noah in the ark,  
I have seen the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra;  
I have been in India when Roma was built,  
I am now come here to the remnant of Troia.

I have been with my Lord in the manger of the ass:  
I strengthened Moses through the water of Jordan;  
I have been in the firmament with Mary Magdalene;  
I have obtained the muse from the cauldron of Caridwen;  
I have been bard of the harp to Lleon of Lochlin.  
I have been on the White Hill, in the court of Cynvelyn,  
For a day and a year in stocks and fetters,  
I have suffered hunger for the Son of the Virgin,  
I have been fostered in the land of the Deity,  
I have been teacher to all intelligences,  
I am able to instruct the whole universe.  
I shall be until the day of doom on the face of the earth;  
And it is not known whether my body is flesh or fish.

Then I was for nine months  
In the womb of the hag Caridwen;  
I was originally little Gwion,  
And at length I am Taliesin.”

And when the king and his nobles had heard the song, they wondered much, for they had never heard the like from a boy so young as he. And when the king knew that he was the bard of Elphin, he bade Heinin, his first and wisest bard, to answer Taliesin and to strive with him. But when he came, he could do no other but play “blerwm” on his lips; and when he sent for the others of the four-and-twenty bards they all did likewise, and could do no other. And Maelgwn asked the boy Taliesin what was his errand, and he answered him in song.

“Puny bards, I am trying  
To secure the prize, if I can;  
By a gentle prophetic strain  
I am endeavouring to retrieve  
The loss I may have suffered;  
Complete the attempt I hope,  
Since Elphin endures trouble  
In the fortress of Teganwy,  
On him may there not be laid  
Too many chains and fetters;  
The Chair of the fortress of Teganwy  
Will I again seek;  
Strengthened by my muse I am powerful;  
Mighty on my part is what I seek,  
For three hundred songs and more  
Are combined in the spell I sing.  
There ought not to stand where I am  
Neither stone, neither ring;  
And there ought not to be about me

Any bard who may not know  
That Elphin the son of Gwyddno  
Is in the land of Artro,  
Secured by thirteen locks,  
For praising his instructor;  
And then I Taliesin,  
Chief of the bards of the west,  
Shall loosen Elphin  
Out of a golden fetter.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“If you be primary bards  
To the master of sciences,  
Declare ye mysteries  
That relate to the inhabitants of the world;  
There is a noxious creature,  
From the rampart of Satanas,  
Which has overcome all  
Between the deep and the shallow;  
Equally wide are his jaws  
As the mountains of the Alps;  
Him death will not subdue,  
Nor hand or blades;  
There is the load of nine hundred wagons  
In the hair of his two paws;  
There is in his head an eye  
Green as the limpid sheet of icicle;  
Three springs arise  
In the nape of his neck;  
Sea-roughs thereon  
Swim through it;  
There was the dissolution of the oxen

Of Deivrdonwy the water-gifted.  
The names of the three springs  
From the midst of the ocean;  
One generated brine  
Which is from the Corina,  
To replenish the flood  
Over seas disappearing;  
The second, without injury  
It will fall on us,  
When there is rain abroad,  
Through the whelming sky;  
The third will appear  
Through the mountain veins,  
Like a flinty banquet,  
The work of the King of kings,  
You are blundering bards,  
In too much solicitude;  
You cannot celebrate  
The kingdom of the Britons;  
And I am Taliesin,  
Chief of the bards of the west,  
Who will loosen Elphin  
Out of the golden fetter.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Be silent, then, ye unlucky rhyming bards,  
For you cannot judge between truth and falsehood.  
If you be primary bards formed by heaven,  
Tell your king what his fate will be.  
It is I who am a diviner and a leading bard,  
And know every passage in the country of your king;  
I shall liberate Elphin from the belly of the stony tower;

And will tell your king what will befall him.  
A most strange creature will come from the sea marsh of  
Rhianedd  
As a punishment of iniquity on Maelgwn Gwynedd;  
His hair, his teeth, and his eyes being as gold,  
And this will bring destruction upon Maelgwn Gwynedd.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Discover thou what is  
The strong creature from before the flood,  
Without flesh, without bone,  
Without vein, without blood,  
Without head, without feet,  
It will neither be older nor younger  
Than at the beginning;  
For fear of a denial,  
There are no rude wants  
With creatures.  
Great God! how the sea whitens  
When first it comes!  
Great are its gusts  
When it comes from the south;  
Great are its evaporations  
When it strikes on coasts.  
It is in the field, it is in the wood,  
Without hand, and without foot,  
Without signs of old age,  
Though it be co-æval  
With the five ages or periods  
And older still,  
Though they be numberless years.  
It is also so wide

As the surface of the earth;  
And it was not born,  
Nor was it seen.  
It will cause consternation  
Wherever God willeth.  
On sea, and on land,  
It neither sees, nor is seen.  
Its course is devious,  
And will not come when desired;  
On land and on sea,  
It is indispensable.  
It is without an equal,  
It is four-sided;  
It is not confined,  
It is incomparable;  
It comes from four quarters;  
It will not be advised,  
It will not be without advice.  
It commences its journey  
Above the marble rock,  
It is sonorous, it is dumb,  
It is mild,  
It is strong, it is bold,  
When it glances over the land,  
It is silent, it is vocal,  
It is clamorous,  
It is the most noisy  
On the face of the earth.  
It is good, it is bad,  
It is extremely injurious.  
It is concealed,  
Because sight cannot perceive it.  
It is noxious, it is beneficial;



It is yonder, it is here;  
It will discompose,  
But will not repair the injury;  
It will not suffer for its doings,  
Seeing it is blameless.  
It is wet, it is dry,  
It frequently comes,  
Proceeding from the heat of the sun,  
And the coldness of the moon.  
The moon is less beneficial,  
Inasmuch as her heat is less.  
One Being has prepared it,  
Out of all creatures,  
By a tremendous blast,  
To wreak vengeance  
On Maelgwn Gwynedd.”

And while he was thus singing his verse near the door, there arose a mighty storm of wind, so that the king and all his nobles thought that the castle would fall on their heads. And the king caused them to fetch Elphin in haste from his dungeon, and placed him before Taliesin. And it is said, that immediately he sang a verse, so that the chains opened from about his feet.

“I adore the Supreme, Lord of all animation,—  
Him that supports the heavens, Ruler of every extreme,  
Him that made the water good for all,  
Him who has bestowed each gift, and blesses it;—  
May abundance of mead be given Maelgwn of Anglesey,  
who supplies us,  
From his foaming meadhorns, with the choicest pure liquor.  
Since bees collect, and do not enjoy,  
We have sparkling distilled mead, which is universally

praised.

The multitude of creatures which the earth nourishes  
God made for man, with a view to enrich him;—  
Some are violent, some are mute, he enjoys them,  
Some are wild, some are tame; the Lord makes them;—  
Part of their produce becomes clothing;  
For food and beverage till doom will they continue.  
I entreat the Supreme, Sovereign of the region of peace,  
To liberate Elphin from banishment,  
The man who gave me wine, and ale, and mead,  
With large princely steeds, of beautiful appearance;  
May he yet give me; and at the end,  
May God of his good will grant me, in honour,  
A succession of numberless ages, in the retreat of  
tranquillity.  
Elphin, knight of mead, late be thy dissolution!”

And afterwards he sang the ode which is called “The Excellence of the Bards.”

“What was the first man  
Made by the God of heaven;  
What the fairest flattering speech  
That was prepared by leuav;  
What meat, what drink,  
What roof his shelter;  
What the first impression  
Of his primary thinking;  
What became his clothing;  
Who carried on a disguise,  
Owing to the wilds of the country,  
In the beginning?  
Wherefore should a stone be hard;

Why should a thorn be sharp-pointed?  
Who is hard like a flint;  
Who is salt like brine;  
Who sweet like honey;  
Who rides on the gale;  
Why ridged should be the nose;  
Why should a wheel be round;  
Why should the tongue be gifted with speech  
Rather than another member?  
If thy bards, Heinin, be competent,  
Let them reply to me, Taliesin.”

And after that he sang the address which is called “The Reproof of the Bards.”

“If thou art a bard completely imbued  
With genius not to be controlled,  
Be thou not untractable  
Within the court of thy king;  
Until thy rigmarole shall be known,  
Be thou silent, Heinin,  
As to the name of thy verse,  
And the name of thy vaunting;  
And as to the name of thy grandsire  
Prior to his being baptized.  
And the name of the sphere,  
And the name of the element,  
And the name of thy language,  
And the name of thy region.  
Avaunt, ye bards above,  
Avaunt, ye bards below!  
My beloved is below,  
In the fetter of Ariansod

It is certain you know not  
How to understand the song I utter,  
Nor clearly how to discriminate  
Between the truth and what is false;  
Puny bards, crows of the district,  
Why do you not take to flight?  
A bard that will not silence me,  
Silence may he not obtain,  
Till he goes to be covered  
Under gravel and pebbles;  
Such as shall listen to me,  
May God listen to him.”

Then sang he the piece called “The Spite of the Bards.”

“Minstrels persevere in their false custom,  
Immoral ditties are their delight;  
Vain and tasteless praise they recite;  
Falsehood at all times do they utter;  
The innocent persons they ridicule;  
Married women they destroy,  
Innocent virgins of Mary they corrupt;  
As they pass their lives away in vanity,  
Poor innocent persons they ridicule;  
At night they get drunk, they sleep the day;  
In idleness without work they feed themselves;  
The Church they hate, and the tavern they frequent;  
With thieves and perjured fellows they associate;  
At courts they inquire after feasts;  
Every senseless word they bring forward;  
Every deadly sin they praise;  
Every vile course of life they lead;  
Through every village, town, and country they stroll;

Concerning the gripe of death they think not;  
Neither lodging nor charity do they give;  
Indulging in victuals to excess.  
Psalms or prayers they do not use,  
Tithes or offerings to God they do not pay,  
On holidays or Sundays they do not worship;  
Vigils or festivals they do not heed.  
The birds do fly, the fish do swim,  
The bees collect honey, worms do crawl,  
Every thing travails to obtain its food,  
Except minstrels and lazy useless thieves.

I deride neither song nor minstrelsy,  
For they are given by God to lighten thought;  
But him who abuses them,  
For blaspheming Jesus and his service.”

Taliesin having set his master free from prison, and having protected the innocence of his wife, and silenced the Bards, so that not one of them dared to say a word, now brought Elphin’s wife before them, and showed that she had not one finger wanting. Right glad was Elphin, right glad was Taliesin.

Then he bade Elphin wager the king, that he had a horse both better and swifter than the king’s horses. And this Elphin did, and the day, and the time, and the place were fixed, and the place was that which at this day is called Morva Rhiannedd: and thither the king went with all his people, and four-and-twenty of the swiftest horses he possessed. And after a long process the course was marked, and the horses were placed for running. Then came Taliesin with four-and-twenty twigs of holly, which he had burnt black, and he caused the youth who was to ride his master’s horse to place them in his belt, and he gave him orders to let all the king’s horses get before him, and as he should overtake one horse after the other, to take one of the twigs and strike the horse with it over the crupper, and then let that twig fall; and after that to take another twig, and do in like manner to every

one of the horses, as he should overtake them, enjoining the horseman strictly to watch when his own horse should stumble, and to throw down his cap on the spot. All these things did the youth fulfil, giving a blow to every one of the king's horses, and throwing down his cap on the spot where his horse stumbled. And to this spot Taliesin brought his master after his horse had won the race. And he caused Elphin to put workmen to dig a hole there; and when they had dug the ground deep enough, they found a large cauldron full of gold. And then said Taliesin, "Elphin, behold a payment and reward unto thee, for having taken me out of the weir, and for having reared me from that time until now." And on this spot stands a pool of water, which is to this time called Pwllbair.

After all this, the king caused Taliesin to be brought before him, and he asked him to recite concerning the creation of man from the beginning; and thereupon he made the poem which is now called "One of the Four Pillars of Song."

"The Almighty made,  
Down the Hebron vale,  
With his plastic hands,  
Adam's fair form:

And five hundred years,  
Void of any help,  
There he remained and lay  
Without a soul.

He again did form,  
In calm paradise,  
From a left-side rib,  
Bliss-throbbing Eve.

Seven hours they were  
The orchard keeping,

Till Satan brought strife,  
With wiles from hell.

Thence were they driven,  
Cold and shivering,  
To gain their living,  
Into this world.

To bring forth with pain  
Their sons and daughters,  
To have possession  
Of Asia's land.

Twice five, ten and eight,  
She was self-bearing,  
The mixed burden  
Of man-woman.

And once, not hidden,  
She brought forth Abel,  
And Cain the forlorn,  
The homicide.

To him and his mate  
Was given a spade,  
To break up the soil,  
Thus to get bread.

The wheat pure and white,  
Summer tilth to sow,  
Every man to feed,  
Till great yule feast.

An angelic hand  
From the high Father,  
Brought seed for growing  
That Eve might sow;

But she then did hide  
Of the gift a tenth,  
And all did not sow  
Of what was dug.

Black rye then was found,  
And not pure wheat grain,  
To show the mischief  
Thus of thieving.

For this thievish act,  
It is requisite,  
That all men should pay  
Tithe unto God.

Of the ruddy wine,  
Planted on sunny days,  
And on new-moon nights;  
And the white wine.

The wheat rich in grain  
And red flowing wine  
Christ's pure body make,  
Son of Alpha.

The wafer is flesh,  
The wine is spilt blood,  
The Trinity's words  
Sanctify them.



The concealed books  
From Emmanuel's hand  
Were brought by Raphael  
As Adam's gift,

When in his old age,  
To his chin immersed  
In Jordan's water,  
Keeping a fast,

Moses did obtain  
In Jordan's water,  
The aid of the three  
Most special rods.

Solomon did obtain  
In Babel's tower,  
All the sciences  
In Asia land.

So did I obtain,  
In my bardic books,  
All the sciences  
Of Europe and Africa.

Their course, their bearing,  
Their permitted way,  
And their fate I know,  
Unto the end.

Oh! what misery,  
Through extreme of woe,  
Prophecy will show  
On Troia's race!

A coiling serpent  
Proud and merciless,  
On her golden wings,  
From Germany.

She will overrun  
England and Scotland,  
From Lychlyn sea-shore  
To the Severn.

Then will the Brython  
Be as prisoners,  
By strangers swayed,  
From Saxony.

Their Lord they will praise,  
Their speech they will keep,  
Their land they will lose,  
Except wild Walia.

Till some change shall come,  
After long penance,  
When equally rife  
The two crimes come.

Britons then shall have  
Their land and their crown,  
And the stranger swarm  
Shall disappear.

All the angel's words,  
As to peace and war,  
Will be fulfilled  
To Britain's race."

He further told the king various prophecies of things that should be in the world, in songs, as follows.

## FOOTNOTES

1. It is also stated, that there is in the Hengwrt Library, a MS. containing the Graal in Welsh, as early as the time of Henry I. I had hoped to have added this to the present collection; but the death of Col. Vaughan, to whom I applied, and other subsequent circumstances, have prevented me from obtaining access to it.
2. This dialogue consists of a series of repartees with a play upon words, which it is impossible to follow in the translation.
3. Hades.
4. The word "Pryder" or "Pryderi" means anxiety.
5. The version in the Greal adds, "And their coin was fairy money;" literally, dwarf's money: that is, money which, when received, appeared to be good coin, but which, if kept, turned into pieces of fungus, &c.
6. Taliesin.
7. The mention of Gwyddno Garanhir instead of Elphin ab Gwyddno in this place is evidently an error of some transcriber of the MS.